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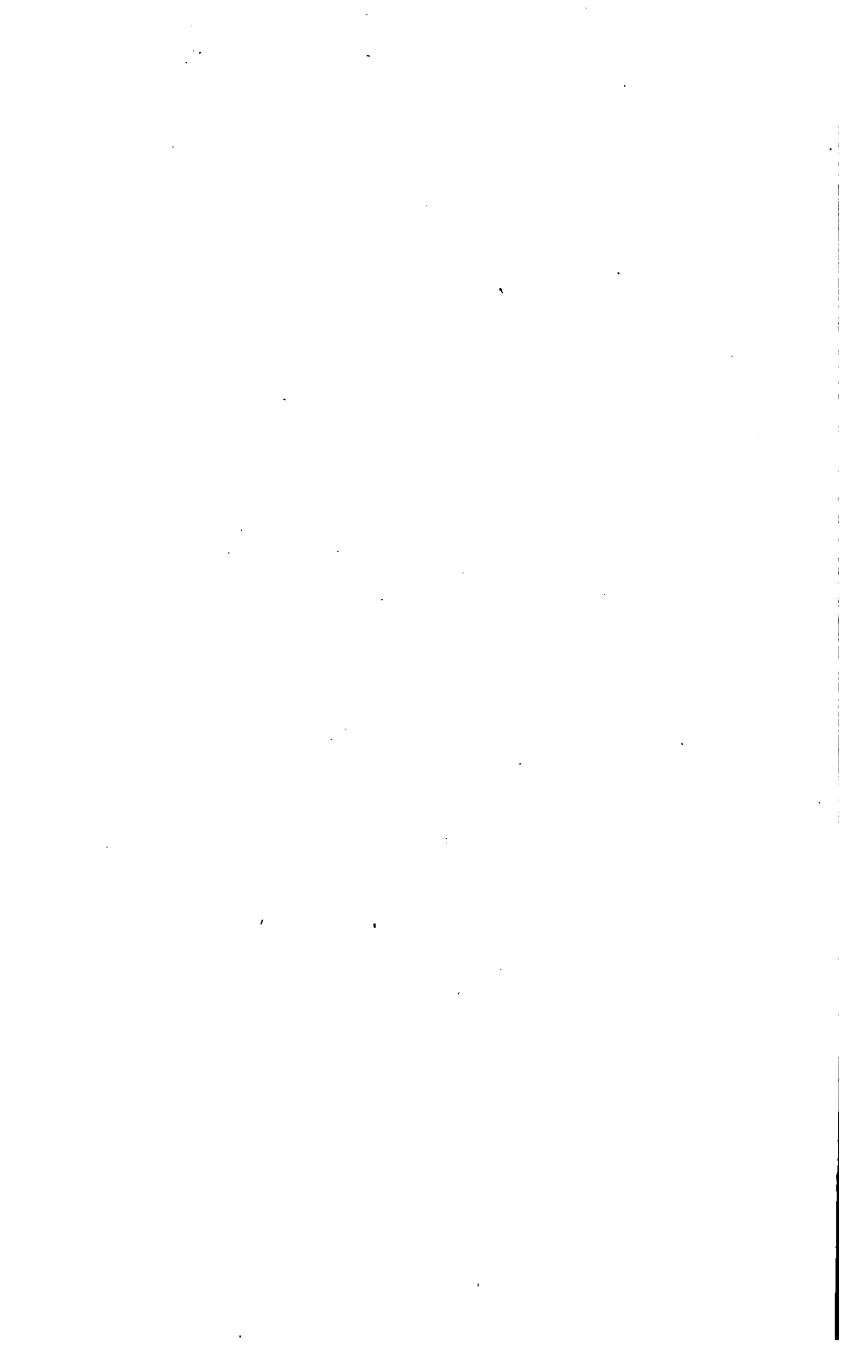


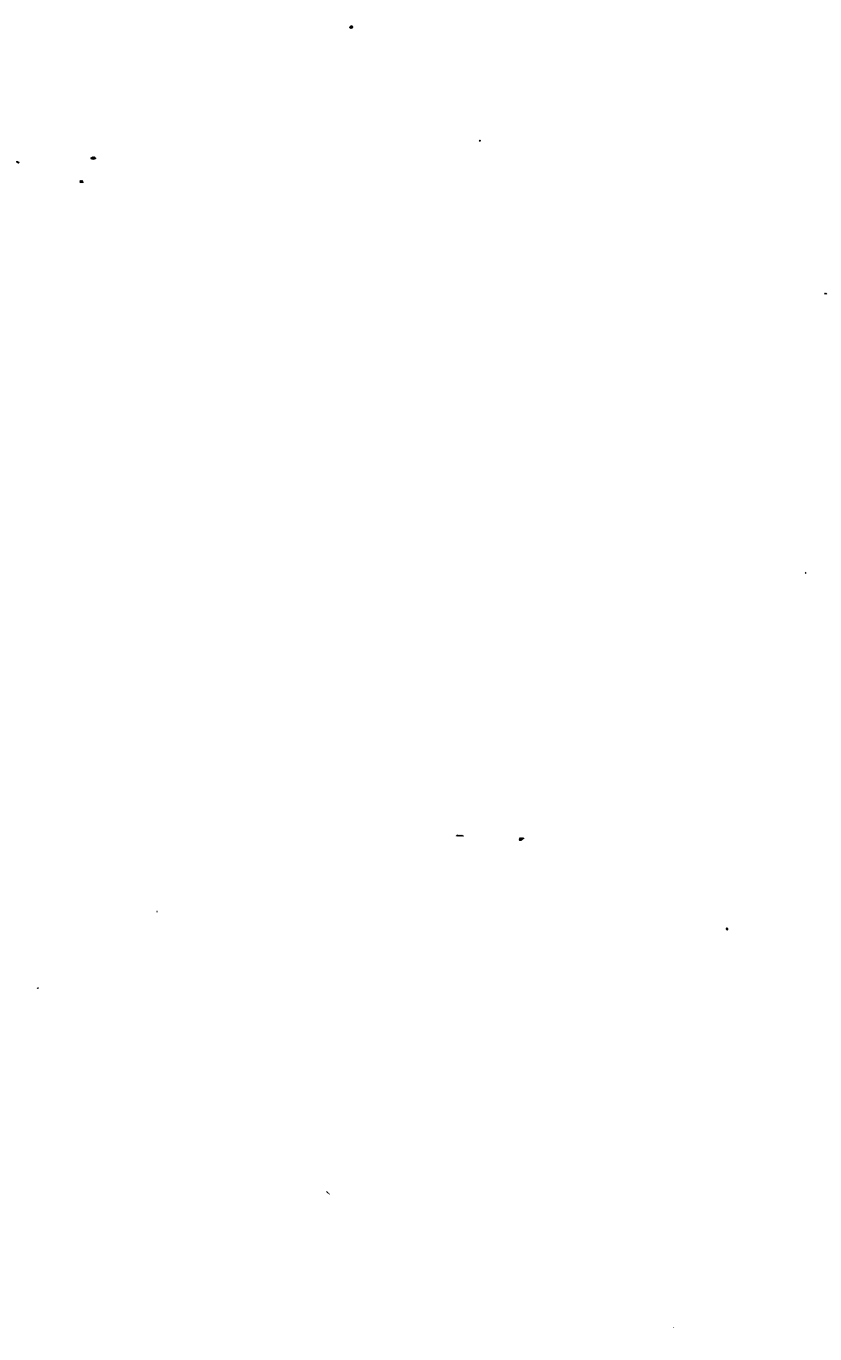
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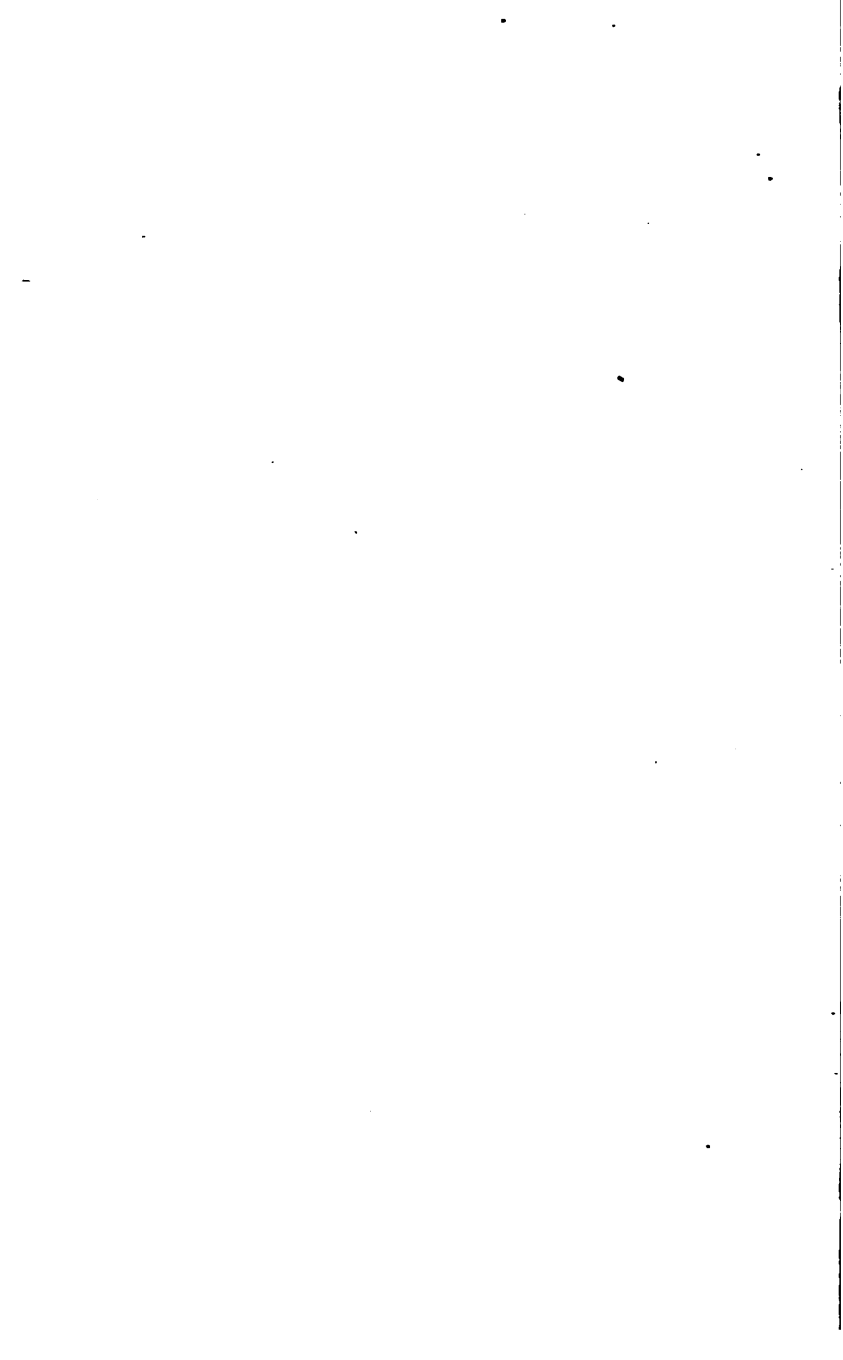
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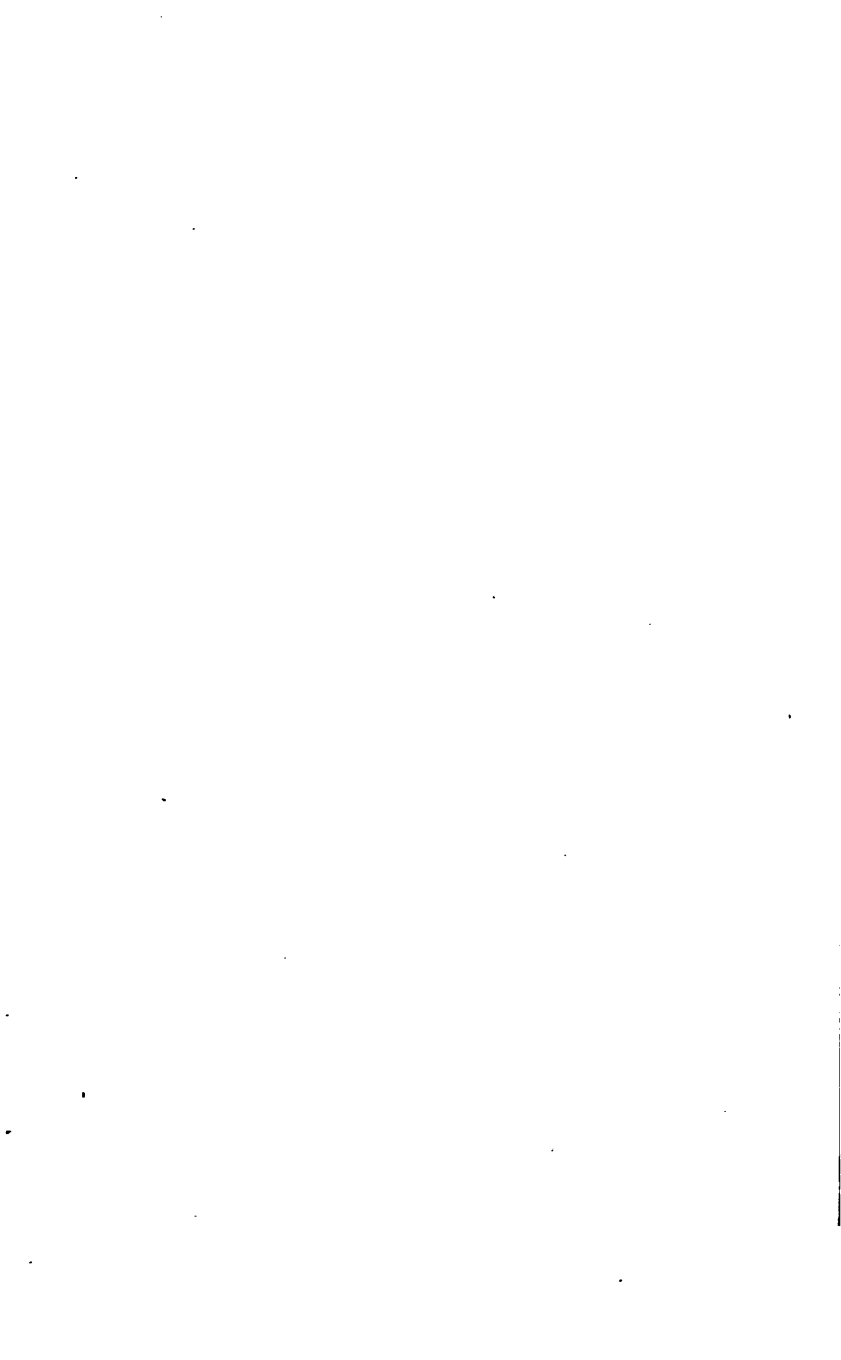
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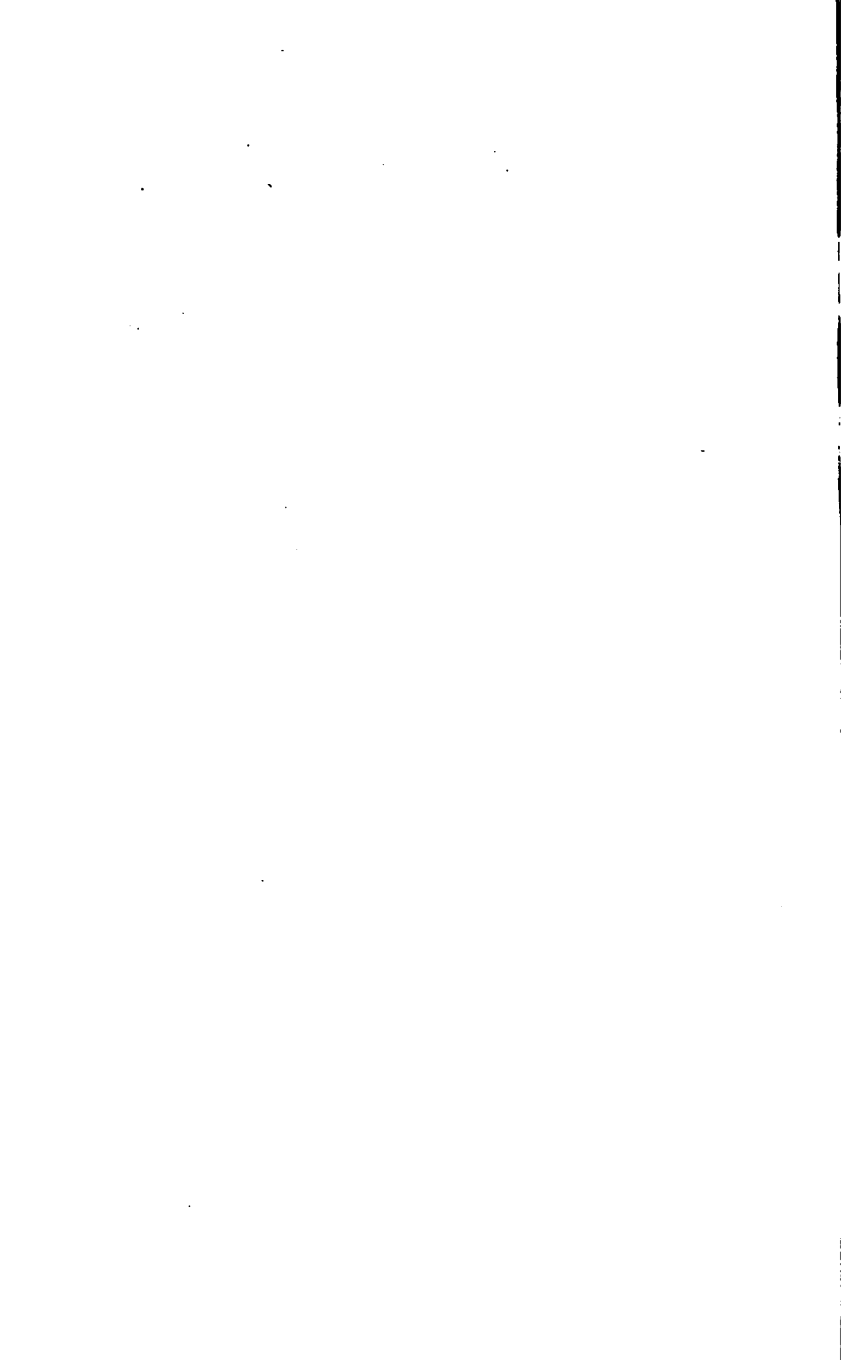


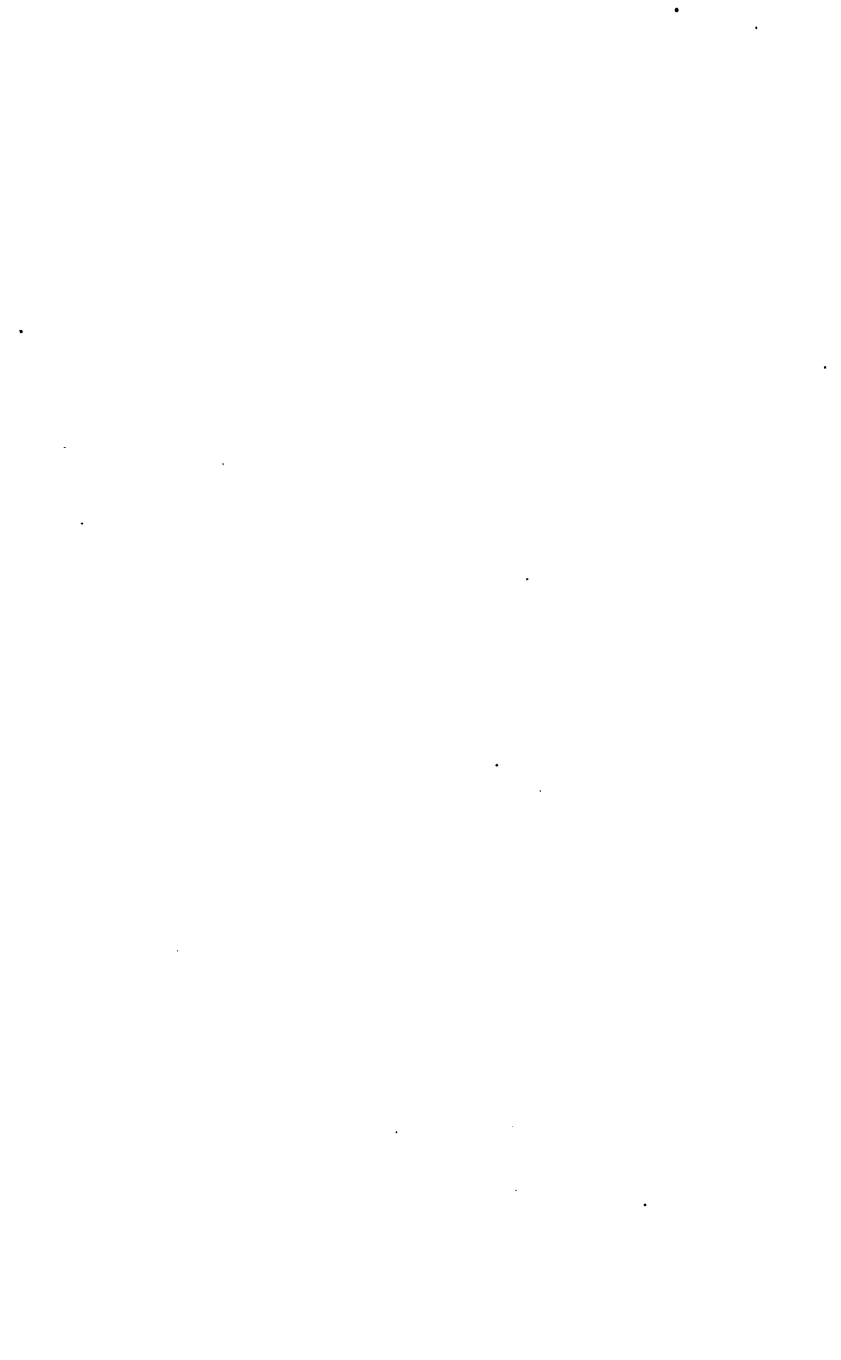














JOURNEY TO THE MINE.

THE
GOLDEN SANDS
OF
Mexico.

A MORAL AND RELIGIOUS TALE:

TO WHICH IS ADDED

TRUE RICHES;

OR,

THE REWARD OF SELF-SACRIFICE.

With Illustrations

BY W. CROOME.

"The liberal deviseth liberal things, and by liberal things shall he stand."

PHILADELPHIA:
LINDSAY AND BLAKISTON.
1850.

1860, Dec. 13.
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THE two stories contained in this volume are the productions of writers already favorably known to the public. They both inculcate a moral lesson which seems particularly suited for the correction of an error very prevalent in our times—the eager and unscrupulous pursuit of wealth, at the risk of all moral culture, all domestic happiness, and often of life itself.

The second story, a sort of counterpart to the first, exhibits the happiness which attends the sacrifice of false, and the pursuit of ‘true riches.’

The publishers trust that the little volume will be deemed worthy a place among those invaluable works which aim at real *utility*, in the highest sense of the word.

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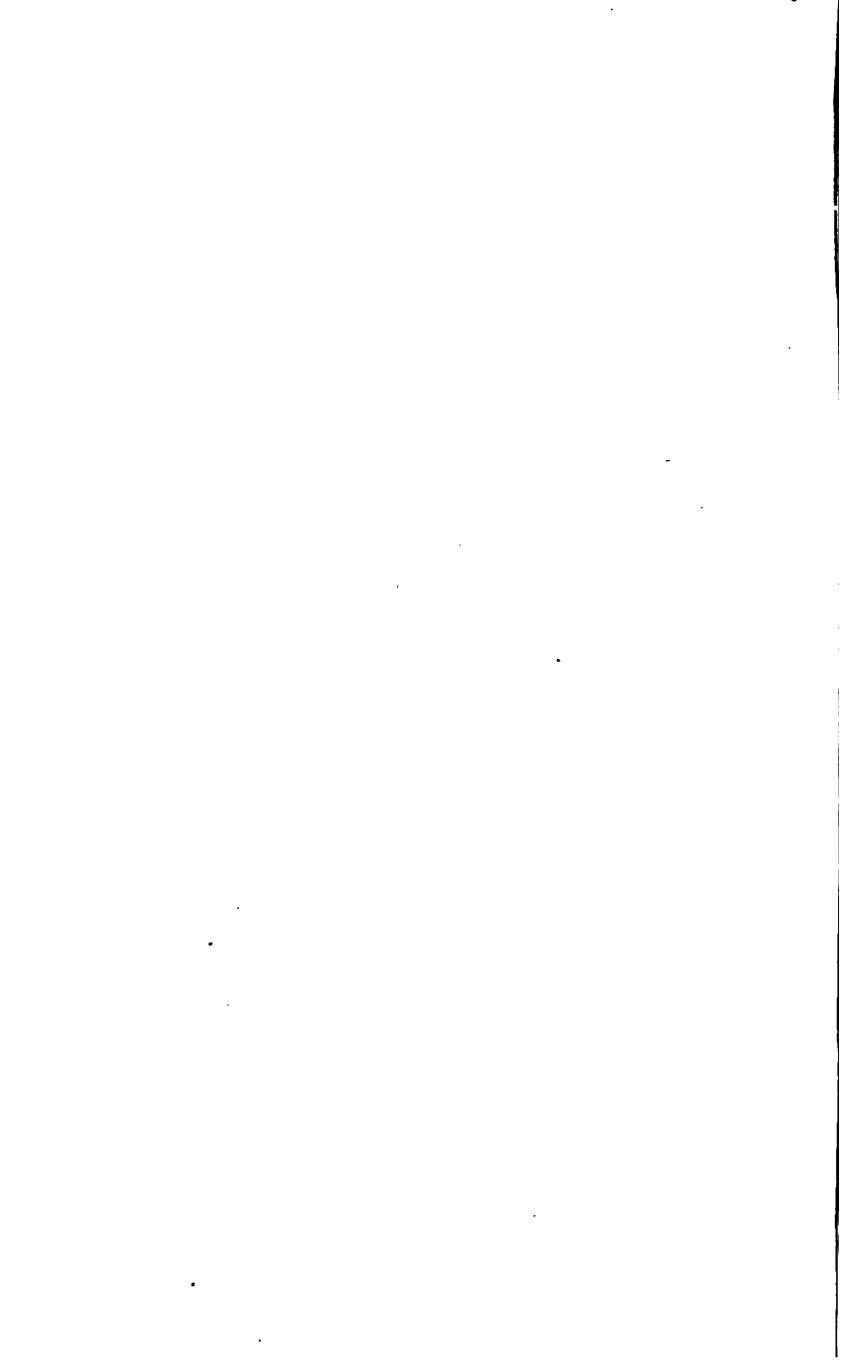
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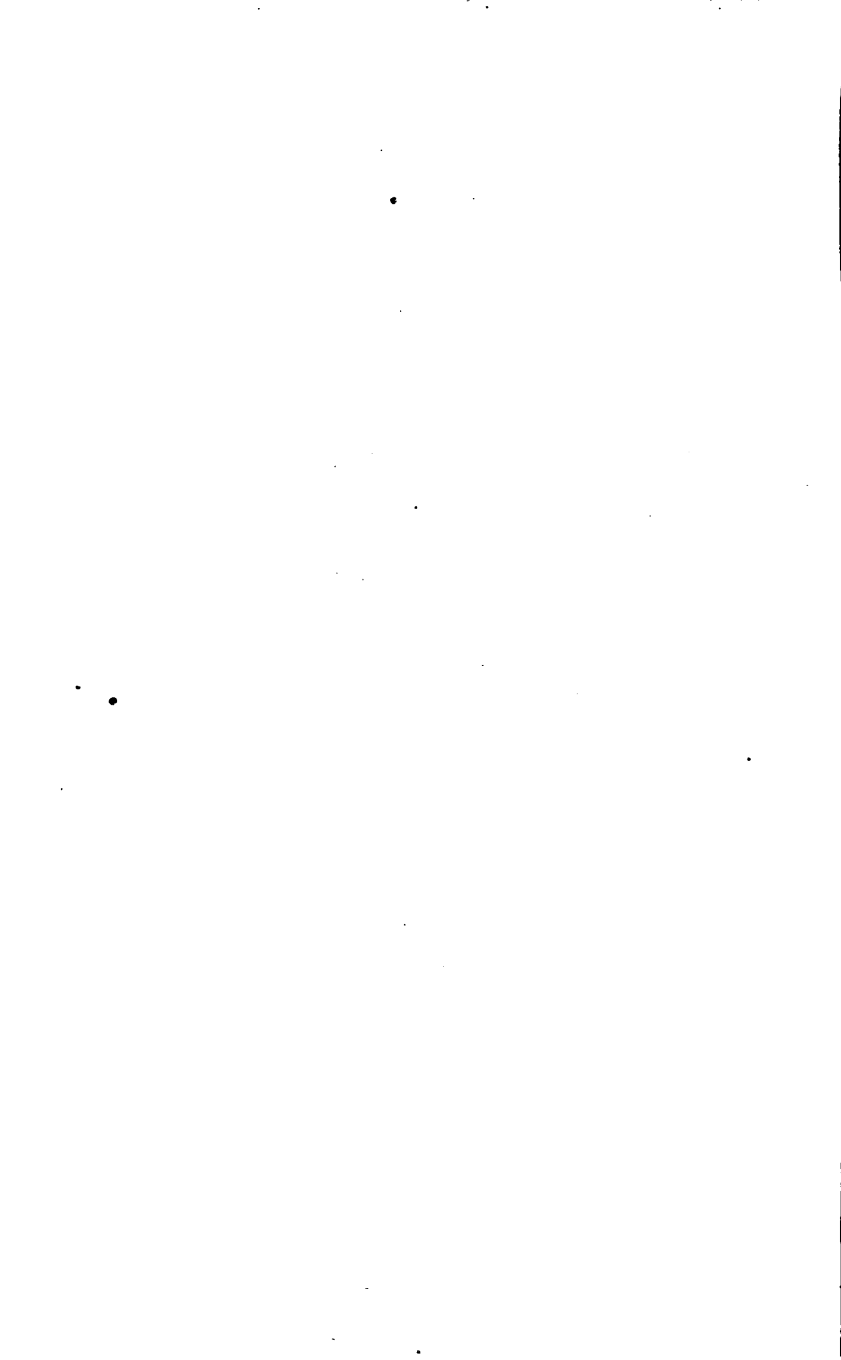
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THE GOLDEN SANDS. .

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THE GOLDEN SANDS.



CHAPTER I.

FATHER THOMAS.

No country of the New World is more interesting to the traveller or the historian, than Mexico. The story of its conquest by a handful of wanderers from regions three thousand miles distant, falls upon the ear like a romance of chivalry. The empire which they endeavored to establish, the massive structures they reared, fondly dreaming that their descendants, for centuries to come, would revel in them, the government they established over millions, loom through the vista of ages, like the gigantic, yet apparently human, phantoms, which men sometimes observe, magnified by the mist and the dis-

tance, on the heights of Switzerland. And their thirst for wealth—for ribs of gold and stores of diamonds—which impelled them to tear open the bowels of the Cordilleras, and to wander over plains, whose sands, glaring beneath the scorching sun, harbored no living thing, save the scorpion and the rattlesnake, appears not like the tame avarice which haunts the worldling of our day, but the passion of a demon, scattering around him destruction and death. And, as though completing the strange picture, the children of the Aztec and the Toltec mingle with the descendants of the conquerors; heedless alike of their own degradation, or of the cry of their ancestors, which, from every rock and from every plain, is raised aloft for vengeance.

The domination of the Spaniards in Mexico has terminated; the buildings erected by them are decaying; a blight has settled over the land which was once the theatre of mighty deeds. Yet the tale of their deeds and sufferings is still sung in verse, and proudly narrated in history; and many traditions concerning themselves, or the generation immediately succeeding them, have descended to the present century. Some of these contain startling exhibitions of human depravity; others relate the sad fate of some Indian princess, or Spanish

lady of rank ; and a few sketch the downward road from virtue to vice, as trodden by him who permits the desire of wealth to grow upon him, until everything holy is eradicated from his bosom.

It is a story of the latter kind that we purpose to relate. The tradition upon which it is founded is still told, with unvarying exactness, to the traveller who descends into the Valley of Mexico ; and the poor Indian seems to grieve, for a moment, over his fallen condition, as the story compels him to recite the tale of his oppressions.

About seventy miles north-east from the city of Mexico, is the small town of Real del Monte, situated many hundred feet above the level of the ocean. The traveller who stands upon the mountain ridge above the town, at sunset, beholds one of the most glorious scenes that the eye of man can look on. Below him, to the east, stretch the vast table-lands, one below another, like the steps of a giant, till they end in *Tierra Caliente*, or burning plains, which border the Gulf. Over these, the olive, the palm, and the cypress, wave their stately heads ; while shrubs and flowers, of a size and luxuriance unknown beyond the tropics, shoot up in mimic forests, in every direction. This scene, so

gorgeous during the day, is enveloped in twilight even before sunset, in consequence of the chains of mountains which intervene between it and the western horizon. Far different is it, on the west of the traveller. Should he turn in that direction, he may observe, at a glance, the entire basin of Mexico, encompassed on every side by its rim of mountains. On the south is Popocatapetl, surrounded by ridges of congealed lava, and the deep, dark ravines, which separate it from the neighboring heights. On the west are the branches of the Cordilleras, piled crag upon crag, until the summits are wrapped in clouds. In the middle of the basin is the chain of lakes, stretching from north to south: between the two largest, is the capital. On the plains below, are impenetrable forests, already lost to day, and deep ravines, whose hollows echo with the hiss of serpents and the roar of wild beasts. Yet, long after the twilight has left these depths, the sunbeams play over the surfaces of the quiet lakes above, and illumine the churches and old palaces of Mexico, with a soft and pleasing splendor.

On this mountain ridge, according to the tradition of the Indians, there lived, many years ago, a Spanish priest or padre. The Indian village in





FATHER THOMAS BLESSING THE INDIAN CHILDREN.

which he resided, was situated in the recesses of the mountains, at some distance to the north of where Real del Monte now stands. Being a secluded spot, it was rarely trodden by the foot of the stranger; so that there, if anywhere in the New World, the missionary of a purer faith than that of Aztec might hope for success, in his efforts to convert the heathen around.

And for that high mission none seemed better fitted than Father Thomas, as he was called by the Indians. Unostentatious in language or manners, he knew well how to adapt his instructions to the capacities of his simple hearers; and, retired in habits, he unconsciously maintained his dignity, by rarely appearing among the Indians, except when duty called him. His dwelling was small, but neat and substantial. The Indians remembered that he had helped to build it with his own hands, and they loved him the more for it. Inside, the rooms were cool and comfortable; and often, as the Indian, heated and weary, plodded homeward from his daily toil, Father Thomas would appear at the door, invite him in, and, after bestowing his blessing, would give to the grateful penitent some little delicacy, that the good Father had brought with him while returning from his last yearly visit to the

capital. Sometimes, too, when the day had been unusually warm, and the old man, as his custom was in sultry weather, walked out in the evening to enjoy the breeze from the mountains, the little children, sunburnt and half naked, would follow him up the narrow path, asking, in tones mingled with awe, for his blessing. Then the good Father would pause, and seating himself on a rock, with the little ones around him, he strove, by the aid of illustrations from the mighty objects around, to impress upon their benighted minds a knowledge of the true God, and of our relations towards him.

Such were the actions which endeared Father Thomas to the Indians of the village in which he resided. Gradually, the result of his teachings and his labors became apparent. The Indians were more thoughtful; they learned to speak of the one Great Spirit, and to pray to Him; they buried their hideous household deities, and carved the cross upon the most sacred corner of their dwellings. The eyes of the Father overflowed with tears of gratitude, when scores of penitents — men, women, and children — flocked to the church for baptism, and when others, still more zealous, aided him in the conversion of their brethren. Nor did the Indian, as he sat beneath the imposing altar,

and listened to the service of his new faith, heightened as it was by the deeply-solemn tones of the Father, regret that he had exchanged the gloomy mysteries of the old religion for the glorious pageantry of the new.

Thus surrounded by a congregation for whom he had done so much, and who loved and revered him; secluded in a mountain home, with the results of his own skill and the devotion of his people around him, and too distant from society to be influenced by its opinion or corrupted by its evils, the good Father seemed destined to finish a long life of usefulness in peace. Unlike his countrymen, he seemed above the feelings of avarice and cruelty; and as, year by year, his step grew feebler, and his hair whiter, his character appeared brighter and holier, as though his spirit were fitting itself for another world.

CHAPTER II.

THE BRIGHT-COLORED SAND.

As Father Thomas grew older, the love of the Indians for him increased. He was still vigorous; yet rarely did he appear in the village without being surrounded by several of his people, who craved the pleasure of bearing him upon their shoulders. Though weary with labor, they would frequently bear him in this manner from rock to rock; choosing the coolest stream, or most retired grot, near which to seat him. Observing how he loved the works of nature, they frequently climbed, with daring zeal, to the summits of the mountain ridge, or penetrated deep caverns, to gather for him, spar, petrifications, curious flowers, or relics of Aztec art. The old man received these tokens of affection with benignity; and it was observed

with pleasure, by the givers, that such curiosities were kept in a separate apartment, in which he delighted to pass the first hours after breakfast.

But there was one custom of the good Father, upon which the Indians looked with superstitious awe. They had seen him writing; and no tone of authority, nor ceremony of the church, had impressed their imaginations so deeply, as this tracing of unknown characters upon sheets of that singular substance — paper. At first, they were accustomed to collect in groups, and peep cautiously through the half-open door, at the old man, as, seated at a small desk, he pursued the mystical business. Various were the opinions entertained of the letters. Some imagined that they were a kind of talisman, by which the old man could bind or loosen the elements, throw the volcanoes into irruption, and heave the ground with earthquakes. Some believed that they were audible words, which spake at night to the 'Padre's god,' concerning the progress of his mission. Nay, a few of the Indians had now and then, during a thunder-storm, or amid the deep stillness of midnight, *heard* some of these words uttered, and distinctly recognized the answer. But the majority of the tribe supposed that the productions of the Father's pen were little crea-

tures, who, without possessing power for good or evil, merely whispered to him, in tones which nobody but himself understood, the words which he spake to them on Sundays and fast-days.

The latter opinion gradually prevailed; and as the dread with which the act of writing was at first regarded wore away, an increased degree of reverence for the Father, and esteem for his art, supplied its place. The possession of a scrap of paper, upon which the old man had traced a few words, was considered one of the greatest of blessings; and no pains were spared to adorn the precious talisman in the most fanciful manner.

One evening, many years after the old man first established his mission in the village, an Indian named Zoamil, one of the most influential of his tribe, passed the Padre's door. This man, during more than a month, had been absent from the village; so that he was already mourned as dead. Great, therefore, was the joy of the Indians when they beheld him, about sunset, descending one of the high mountains to the north, bearing on his shoulders what all judged to be a present of curiosities for the Padre. The unusual commotion brought the good Father to his door. The wanderer was welcomed to the house, and, after de-

positing his gift, partook of a plentiful repast, set before him by the Padre's own hand.

While Zoamil was refreshing himself, the old man sat down to write. The watchful Indian soon perceived that, after finishing a sheet, the Padre threw over it a quantity of black sand, which he kept in a box. He had never seen this done before, and his curiosity was awakened, yet he said nothing; for he was too intent in observing the old man's motions, to speak. The shower of sand was renewed at the end of every page; and Zoamil sat lost in conjecture concerning this singular action, until Father Thomas had finished his writing. He then kneeled before the Padre, received his blessing, and departed.

Next day, Zoamil was again missing. They looked for him in the evening, but he came not; and the next day, and the next, passed without his appearing. His friends and relatives, by whom he was much beloved, became alarmed. They feared that some spirit of evil, roaming, perhaps, among the neighboring hills, was impelling him to meet it, and remain with it for stated periods. His wife and children ran wailing up and down the village, calling for Zoamil; while many, on their knees, implored the Padre to drive away the demon. The

old man, unable to resist their entreaties, complied, at least in appearance; but for two or three days the result was doubtful. At last, on the afternoon of the sixth day, Zoamil returned. The congratulations of his friends were disregarded, as he passed rapidly through the village, directly to the house of the Padre. It was evident he had found some curiosity, which he believed would enrich the old man's cabinet. But he was destined to be disappointed in the reception he had anticipated. The good Father deemed it his duty to administer a reproof to one who had shown such a disposition to wander; nor would he admit him to the private conference which Zoamil had eagerly craved, until assured that in future the evil habit would be corrected.

Unhappy Zoamil! During this second absence, he had been executing a project, formed while partaking of the Padre's repast, and which he fondly imagined would confer the greatest pleasure upon his spiritual father. But, on being so unexpectedly disappointed, his astonishment and chagrin deprived him, for a moment, of speech; and though he held in his hand what was evidently intended as a present to the Padre, yet it was with apparent shame that he retained his hold of it, when invited into the house.

After much hesitation, however, his present was exhibited to the Padre. It was a quantity of fine and very bright, yellow sand; partly in dust, partly in small grains. For this the Indian had toiled during three days, amid rocks and passes, where the white man would have shuddered to gaze, and the way to which was known only to his tribe. Father Thomas beheld it with astonishment: —

“Who gave you this?” he asked.

“I gathered it, Father,” the Indian answered, timidly.

“And what do you wish me to do with it?”

The Indian, without answering, drew from his bosom a small piece of paper, carefully enveloped in rude cloth. Seizing a stick, he imitated the motions of writing, and then threw his yellow dust over the paper, as he had seen the Padre do with black sand. The truth flashed at once upon the Father’s mind: —

“It is well, Zoamil,” he said, kindly; and the eyes of the poor fellow sparkled with joy, as the old man, laying his hand upon his head, pronounced a blessing upon him.

“Where did you find it?” continued the Padre.

Zoamil put a finger to his lips, and looked steadily upon the ground. It was the Indian token

of silence. The old man perceived that the locality of this new curiosity was to remain a secret; and knowing that entreaty would be useless, he permitted Zoamil to retire without further questioning.

It was soon rumored through the village, that Zoamil, instead of being in league with a demon, had been making himself useful to the Padre, by gathering the yellow sand, in the mountains. The zeal of the simple parishioners was awakened. Many left their homes for a week's excursion; each returning with a small quantity of the yellow sand. The old man smiled with pleasure at these manifestations of affection; and after exhibiting his satisfaction in word and gesture, placed a small box in a conspicuous part of the outer court attached to the house, into which the sand might be emptied at any time. To avoid being overstocked with the new article, the Padre ordered that no more sand should be brought at one time, than was sufficient to fill the box.

From this time, the good Father's writings appeared in a new and decidedly improved dress. Being an assiduous employer of the pen, his use of the new sand was extensive; and great emulation existed in the village, about filling the box in the court. In order to guard against contention, the

Indians were divided into bands, which made regular excursions over the mountains, in quest of the sand. Their return to the village was always hailed with enthusiasm; and it was peculiarly gratifying to these simple people, that on such occasions the Padre partook of the general joy, and strove, in a variety of ways, to express the affection which he entertained for his people.

CHAPTER III.

THE JEWELLER'S DISCOVERY.

THE time of the Padre's annual visit to the capital was near at hand. It was a period of sadness for the Indians, who were then, for about two weeks, deprived of his counsel and instructions. But the old man was becoming incapacitated for so long and perilous a journey. Age began to stiffen his joints and unbrace his nerves. This year, therefore, he determined, instead of going himself, to send six Indians, his escort on such occasions, with full directions for everything he might want, to a priest, an intimate acquaintance, residing in the capital. Having written and sealed his letters for that purpose, he entrusted them to Zoamil, who, on account of his superior strength and bravery, was selected to lead the party.

Let us, for a few moments, leave Father Thomas amid his villagers, and accompany Zoamil and his companions to Mexico. They wound along the mountains and through the great ravines which surround the town of Real del Monte, until they reached the more level surface, which forms the basin or valley of Mexico. With hasty steps they continued on, around the lakes, until they reached the northern gate of the city. On the afternoon of the third day, they arrived at the old priest's house. He received them kindly, and, after expressing his regret at the Padre's ill-health, set before them some simple refreshment.

Among the several friends to whom the Padre had written, was a jeweller, to whom he entrusted the mending of a small ornament of gold, attached to the drapery of the altar. The priest, faithful to his friend's wishes, sent Zoamil and three others to this man, shortly after their arrival. The jeweller received their letter, and pointed them to seats; after which, he resumed his chair beside a small table, and opened the letter.

The look of astonishment with which he gazed upon the yellow characters did not escape the watchful eyes of Zoamil; and when he poured the loose grains, which had rubbed from the paper, into

his hand, and eagerly scrutinized them, the Indian was all attention. Suddenly the jeweller arose, and carried the open letter into another room. His return was long delayed; and, while left to themselves, the Indians, prompted partly by fear and partly by astonishment, speculated upon the strange movements of the jeweller. They could give no explanation, however, of the singular interest with which he seemed to regard the yellow sand; and at length their whisperings were cut short, by the reappearance of the Padre's friend. The open letter was in his hand; but the yellow dust had disappeared.

The Indians remained five days at the capital. During that time, they were employed in buying and packing the books, paper, and other articles, which were to be carried to their master. They departed for the village, well loaded with goods and presents; the latter of which had been sent by the various friends of the Padre, who had become acquainted with him during his visits to the city, and appreciated his virtues.

And now let us imagine the Padre seated in his cool parlor, with the six Indians before him. They have met with neither loss nor accident; the congratulations of friends upon their safe arrival are

over; the packs have been taken from their shoulders and stored in one corner of the room; and each one is eager to answer the Padre's questions concerning their journey, their reception, and the scenes they have witnessed. Zoamil and his companions answered all faithfully; and afterwards, as though expecting that he was about to disclose something of importance, the former related, in detail, the strange conduct of the jeweller, with respect to the yellow sand. At this latter intelligence the old man opened his eyes. He had ever entertained a rather uneasy feeling concerning this same sand, especially as the Indians appeared deaf whenever he asked where it came from. This feeling, it is true, had gradually weakened; yet it occasionally whispered doubtfully and suspiciously. Zoamil's story was well calculated to increase the old man's perplexity. Why should the jeweller, before he had read a single line of the letter, examine so eagerly the loose grains of sand? Why should he retire to a separate room, apparently for no other purpose than to pursue his examinations more at leisure? These were questions which the Padre could not answer; and the oftener they occurred to him, the more he was confused. The cheerful conversation of the Indians, describing

the scenes and incidents of their journey, was lost to his ear ; his thoughts were upon the yellow sand, and the mystery connected with it.

After the Indians had departed, the first impulse of the Padre was to empty a quantity of the sand, which was in a box on his table, upon a sheet of paper. Bending over the table, he examined it with great attentiveness. He rolled the grains between his thumb and fore-finger, and scattered them over the paper, scrutinizing each one separately. Their color appeared to him brighter than before ; and had the keen eye of Zoamil been there, it might have observed that the old man, with a solicitude which he had never exhibited before, gathered up each grain to the very last, replaced them in the box, and then carefully examined the table, lest some might have eluded his search.

Why such greediness in that white-haired old man ? Was it mere curiosity ? Or did he deem that, in the sparkling grains before him, lay hid a treasure ? Yet, what if it were a treasure ? Could it make him happier, more useful, or more truly rich — him, whose frozen frame could no more visit his friends, or join in the pursuits that were the joy of his youth ? The worldling, aged as he, would scarcely have rejoiced ; but for the aged

missionary of the Cross to be gladdened by worldly wealth, after he had proved himself a good and faithful servant, and was almost ready to receive his eternal reward, were most unseemly.

But why his uneasiness? For, after all, was it pure virtue which had enabled him to condemn riches and remain poor; or was it the absence of temptation? Time furnished the answer.

After two hours of disquietude, the Padre unlocked a small box, containing the letters from his friends. The first which met his eye, was from Lucas, the goldsmith. Seizing it eagerly, he broke the seal, and began reading the contents. It commenced in a strain which the good Father did not understand. Long sentences, occupied in talking about riches, deception, hidden wealth, gold, and similar topics, caused the old man to stare. Pausing, he read the first sentence again and again. That the jeweller was addressing him, he could not doubt; and yet it was in a style fitted for the address to a millionaire. The old man became still more puzzled as he read further; and more than once he turned over the sheet, to examine the signature, whether it was really that of his friend Lucas. Suddenly the mystery was explained. "No doubt you will deny all this, good Father," the

missive ran; "but is not the proof before me? The very ink of your letter is dried with gold-dust!"

This opened the Padre's eyes. For three months he had been wasting gold-dust over letters and sermons, and even prohibiting the Indians from bringing him more than two or three ounces at a time. A tumult of strange feelings — disappointment, vexation, and partial joy — rushed into his mind. "Gold-dust!" he exclaimed, rising and pacing the floor; "gold-dust to dry ink with! Fool that I have been!" But words so strange and impassioned startled him; and recollecting his holy calling, he crossed himself devoutly, and endeavored to compose his mind. But the golden vision was still around him; and, half involuntarily, he extended his hand toward the box in which the precious grains were deposited. But something whispered that he was doing wrong; and the old man, trembling with strong emotion, knelt before a crucifix, and muttered prayer after prayer, over his rosary. But his mind, as if held by a giant's grasp, struggled in vain to fix its attention upon holy things; and unconsciously the old man let the words of prayer die upon his lips, while his imagination reverted to the yellow sand, and the wealth

he had wasted. In a few minutes he was again pacing the floor, with one hand upon his wrinkled brow, and the other clenched with a nervousness which exhibited the mental conflict within.

The sun was already sinking beneath a dense mass of clouds, which skirted the horizon far as the eye could reach. Rapid gusts of wind, sweeping from the mountain-tops, and that singular appearance in the atmosphere, which in the tropics usually precedes a storm, announced that a change of weather was at hand. The Indians might be seen, from the Padre's windows, driving the animals belonging to them into the village, in order to place them under shelter. The sun's last ray sank into the cloud; and in a space of time which would appear ominously short to the inhabitant of a more northern clime, darkness, so dense as to be almost total, settled around the village and the mountains. In a few minutes no living thing was to be seen. The Indians had shut themselves in their dwellings; no light, either natural or artificial, was to be seen; and the village, still as the grave, seemed to hold its breath, in awe at the approaching storm.

The pause was but short. Heavy thunder began to mutter in the distance, and rolled, in faint echoes, along the peaks of the mountain ridge.

The wind swept on in rapid gusts, howling among the rocky solitudes, and driving before it masses of clouds, which appeared like another mountain range, hanging in the air. Then the thunder rolled nearer, breaking and echoing among the tall cliffs, until it burst in full fury over the village, rocking the mountains like an earthquake, and sending forth sheets of dazzling flame, that rent the black pall of night, and went hissing down to the groves and forests which lined the ravines below.

And where, during this scene, was the Padre? Since the sun had set, many an anxious eye, among his people, had been turned toward his window; for there, contrary to anything which had before been known during a storm, the window still remained without a covering, and a solitary light sent its flickering rays through the surrounding gloom. Various were the fears and conjectures of these simple people, as to the cause of the unwonted appearance. Some feared that he was sick; and were restrained from going to see, only by the custom, long established, of not disturbing the old man at night, unless his presence was necessary in cases of sickness or death. Others believed that he was writing, and imagined that they occasionally caught

a glimpse of his venerable head, as it bent over the table. But most of them thought that he was at his devotions; and as the image of his form, bending in lowly supplication for his people, rose before them, many crossed themselves with childlike reverence, and offered up their simple prayers to the great Power above.

How beautiful the scene presented by these rude yet affectionate children of Nature, as, with looks of intense anxiety, they watched the flickering of their pastor's lamp, and whispered their fervent prayers for his safety! Surely, such petitions were a guard around that frail old man, to ward him from temptation.

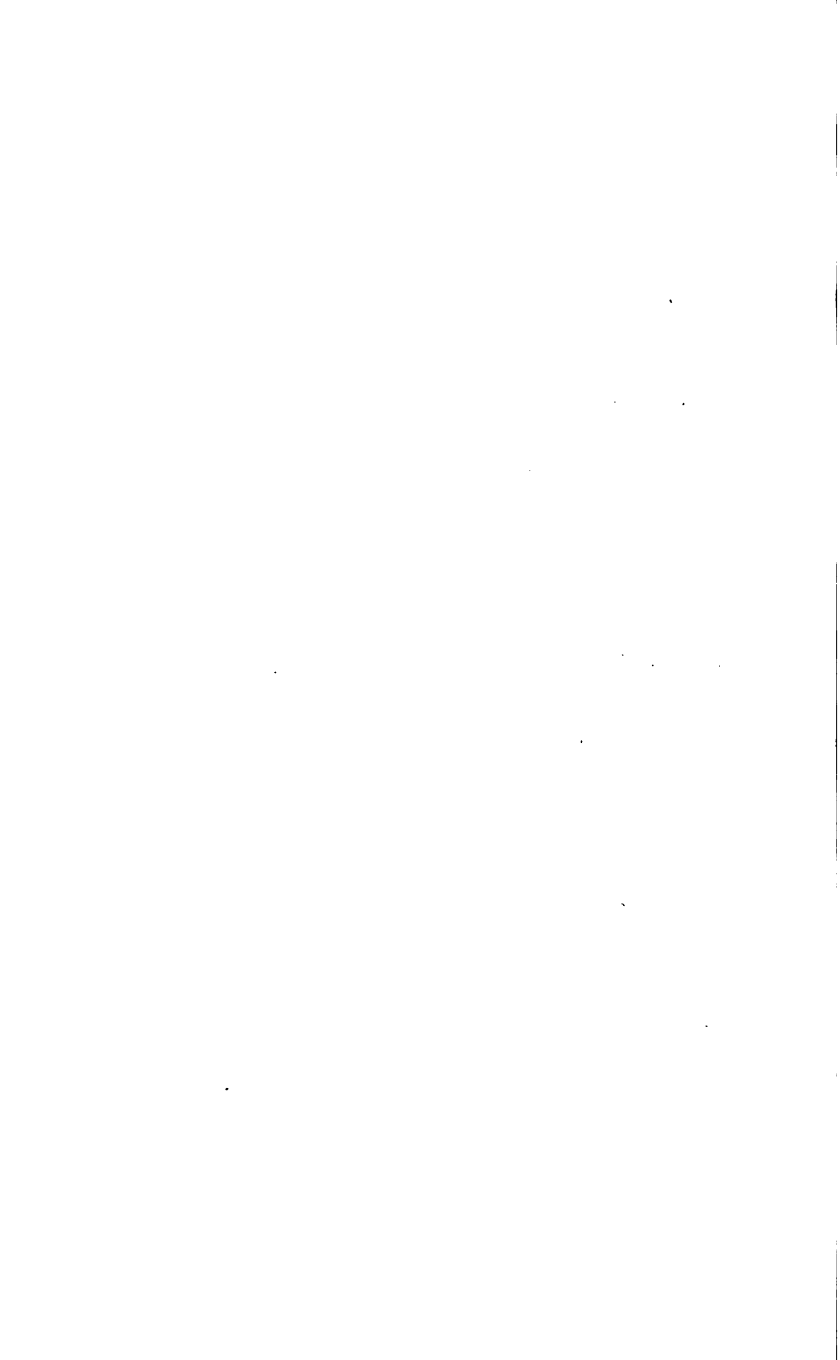
Alas! The demon of avarice had entered, where, but a few hours before, aught sinful or earthly appeared forever excluded. The Padre was neither studying nor praying. Alone, unconscious of sounds or scenes around, he was wrestling with the spirit whose mission was one of guilt and misery. But, often as he tried to prevail — when he sought to banish all thought of the glittering treasure — some new form of temptation would arise, and his mind would again revert to his prospective wealth. The sun went down; the darkness and the storm came on; but they were unheeded. When no

longer able to examine the gold-dust which he held in his hand, he lighted his lamp, and, by the help of its flame, continued to pore over the precious grains. Even the thunder, muttering in the distance, did not disturb him. Suddenly, however, a loud clap broke over the mountain on which the village stood; and as the old man started and gazed around, a sheet of flame glared in his eyes, and appeared almost near enough to melt the grains in his hand. Then came a second explosion, more terrifying than the first, and the village seemed shaken to its very foundation. The Padre dropped his sand upon the table, and, springing to his feet, made the sign of the cross. The storm had begun in its strength. The wind, increased to a hurricane, whirled and shrieked from cliff to cliff; rain descended in broad sheets; and the lightning, flashing and glaring without intermission, seemed like the fires of Popocatepetl during an eruption. In the momentary pauses between the claps of thunder, the crashing of mountain pines could be heard, and the rumbling of masses of rock, which, loosened from their original positions on the sides of the mountains, rolled, with fearful rapidity, into the ravines below.

Father Thomas had witnessed many a tropical



FATHER THOMAS'S TEMPTATION.



storm, without experiencing fear, even for a moment. But now a variety of passions had made him timorous. An impassable gulf appeared to separate him from the source of his former confidence. And when the storm whistled, and the lightning played through his apartment, it was sad to behold the color leave the old man's cheeks, and the shudder which passed through his frame. And when he looked upward, with an effort to pray, his petition was feeble and broken. Once he resolved to destroy the cause of his uneasiness; and his hand was actually upon the small pile of sand which lay on the table, for the purpose of scattering it to the storm. But he paused, considered a moment, and turned away. The tempter had triumphed.

Thus, while the poor Indian was offering up his simple prayer in behalf of the old man, he was sustaining, alone, the mental sufferings which are the cost of the first step in any new sin. There was something in the storm which spoke warningly to the Padre's conscience. It appeared strange to him, that the war of the elements should occur at the very time he was enduring his own mental conflict. Superstition, like fear, is generally the accompaniment of crime; and the old man fancied,

at length, that he heard whisperings, shouts, and peals of fiendish laughter, mingled with the roar of the tempest. Then he would stop his ears, and, resting his arms upon the table, would remain for awhile in the deepest thought.

Is the worldling ready to enquire what cause there was for this agitation of mind? Why not make use of his gold, and be thankful to Providence for the unexpected boon? In this there would certainly have been no harm. But the question, as to the mode of appropriating his treasure, had not presented itself to the Padre's mind. His imagination, possessing, as it did, genuine Spanish irritability, had suddenly become excited by visions of immense wealth. Already, one of the splendid cathedrals of the capital, with its princely salary and gorgeous appendages, appeared within his grasp; and he could not repress the wish, that the time when he should officiate in it would soon be at hand. It was this newly-awakened covetousness that the Padre felt to be wrong; more especially so, as he had ever labored to impress upon his flock, as well as upon himself, the virtue of contentment.

Thus harassed by the tempter, tortured by alternate impulses of vice and virtue, and rendered additionally nervous by the storm, the old man,

as may be supposed, passed a sleepless night. Its hours appeared to be endless; but when they did terminate, and the morning broke in the east, the massive clouds of the preceding evening had separated into thin fleeces, and the blue sky, pure as though washed by the recent torrents, filled the beholder with gladness. The Indians were out long before sunrise, examining the village, in order to ascertain whether any damage had been sustained from the storm.

Father Thomas had not yet appeared. The conflict he had endured in the early part of the night was over. He had resolved on keeping the sand; soothing his conscience by the mental reservation, that he would employ his newly-acquired wealth only in doing good. Still, the awakened thirst after riches remained; and, to gratify it, the Padre determined to allow the Indians to bring him the sand as often as they pleased, and in whatever quantities they thought proper. Now he imagined that he understood why they had refused to inform him of the place where they obtained it. These Indians, simple as they were, were yet wise enough (so the Padre reasoned) to know that the yellow sand was valuable; and, therefore, they had resolved to deceive their spiritual guide, by doling

out a few grains at a time! A feeling of indignation — the first he had ever felt toward those by whom he was loved so much — took possession of his mind; and he resolved not only to force from them an account of the locality of the gold mine, but afterwards to punish Zoamil and his comrades for their obduracy.

CHAPTER IV.

THE TIDE OF WEALTH.

ON the morning that the Padre adopted the foregoing resolution, mass was to be said in the church. The rays of the sun were just gilding the highest peaks of the mountain ridge, as the villagers, leaving their different occupations, thronged along the lanes leading to the sanctuary. There, while waiting for the Padre, they spoke to each other of the storm, and expressed, as well as they could, their gratitude to the Good Spirit for preserving their abodes from devastation. With a punctuality which did honor to their teacher, they had assembled and seated themselves many minutes before the time of service. That time came and passed; and, strange to say, the Padre had not arrived. Such a circumstance was without a pa-

rallel in the history of the village. Every one was anxious about him. Some thought that the storm had raged with greater fury round his house than any of the others; a few asserted that, for a week past, the good man's step had been more feeble than usual, and surmised that it might have been the warning of the messenger from the dark land; while Zoamil, and the companions of his journey to Mexico, traced, or endeavored to trace, a connection between the jeweller's conduct at seeing the yellow sand, and some ill-defined evil, which, as they supposed, had happened to their Padre. But the greater number remembered how the light had been seen at his window on the preceding evening; and, in their credulousness, trembled lest some malignant being, which had then been riding the tempest, had in some mysterious manner overpowered the feeble old man.

Such were the surmisings of these simple yet affectionate villagers. Little did they imagine the character of the singular being, which, as they truly supposed, had been wrestling with their spiritual father. Anxiety was succeeded by alarm; and a few had already volunteered to visit the Padre's house, when he was discerned, at a short distance, approaching the church. Then, despite

the sanctity of the place, exclamations of joy burst from the congregation, hands were clasped in thankfulness, and many a tear, the warm gushing of love and gratitude, coursed down the dark cheeks of those children of Nature. Every eye was turned toward him as he entered; and, as he passed up the aisle, all who were near enough showed their respect, by reverentially touching the hem of his garment.

The service began; and never was worship more devout or childlike than that which rose from this little church on the mountain-side. In their artless language, the Indians thanked the Good Spirit for preserving their lives, for sheltering them from the storm, and for restoring to them the one whom they loved.

Yet one among them seemed sad. It was Zoamil; — he who, at any time, would cheerfully have risked his life for the good Father's sake. Since the Padre entered, the Indian had not taken his eyes off of him; and, to his keen sight, often, by his tribe, compared to the vulture's, was visible many changes in the old man's appearance and manner. Sometimes, as the words of the service were hurried over, Zoamil started, and gazed yet more intently on his pastor. And then, as the

Padre's voice faltered, and a shade, almost like a scowl of anger, flushed his haggard countenance, the Indian shook his head, and seemed lost in the deepest thought.

The mass was short; and, as soon as it was ended, the congregation crowded toward the Padre. "The Good Spirit bless you, Father," said a poor old woman, as she held on to his flowing garment. "The Great Father, who smiles in the storm and sees in darkness, has been with you," another exclaimed. The old man did not reply to these congratulations. A young mother held up her infant for his blessing; but he turned away without noticing it. "God give my Father peace of soul," said Zoamil, "that he may be calm amid sorrow, as the bird which is lulled to sleep by the storms of Orizaba." "Peace of soul!" the old man ejaculated, half aloud; "Who taught him that prayer?" And then, as the remembrance of the yellow sand, and Zoamil's reserve concerning the mine, occurred to him, he replied to the poor fellow's prayer with a look of hatred. Other salutations were received either with silence or open contempt; and, after hastily bestowing a few blessings, the Padre ordered Zoamil to follow him to the house, and departed. The Indians gazed one upon

another, disappointed, sad, and completely bewildered.

"Zoamil," commenced the Padre, when they were seated in the study; "there is one thing I wish to ascertain from you."

"You shall know it, Father," was the reply.

"I have not enquired for some time," continued the Padre; "but now it is necessary, for the good of our people, that I should be acquainted with it."

"Ask it, Father," said the Indian.

"Tell me, then, where you obtain the yellow sand."

Zoamil started. Surprise struggling with habitual reverence was visible in his countenance. But slowly he placed a finger on his lips, and remained silent. The Padre understood the sign.

"Is this obedience?" he said, sharply.

"God will forgive the Indian," replied Zoamil.

"Never!" ejaculated the old man, hurried away by passion. "He must obey. Where did you get the yellow sand?"

"Zoamil has forgotten his mother tongue," was the answer.

The old man felt that he was foiled, and bit his lips with vexation. There was a long pause, interrupted, at length, by the Indian.

"The good Father is not angry with Zoamil?" The mild tone of these words could not touch the heart, over which had been cast the spell of avarice.

"You have been undutiful and wicked!" exclaimed the old man. "Let Zoamil go forth. He is no longer the Padre's friend."

"God will forgive him," said the poor Indian, with emotion. "O Father, I will gather the bright sand for you all the day long, if you but call me your Zoamil, again."

These words caused the old man to pause. A moment's reflection showed how imprudent was the course he was pursuing; and he promptly resolved upon repairing the evil. Assuming a mild tone, he spoke some encouraging words to Zoamil, expressed his pleasure at his willingness to bring more sand, and pretended to be reconciled. The poor fellow was overjoyed. He loaded the Padre with caresses, assured him of his continued attachment, and begged that he might be allowed to depart immediately for the mountains. The Padre, nothing loath, consented; at the same time, giving him permission to bring as much as he chose. As soon as Zoamil departed, the Padre unlocked the box in which he had carefully stowed away the precious deposit, the night before. There was no

pain at the sight of it, — no mental conflict, like that of the previous evening. A buoyancy, similar to that occasioned by wine, pervaded the old man's heart, as he spread the glittering grains before him. And then the thought of what Zoamil would gather, not only on this excursion, but on many others! Old as he was, his blood danced and burned at the vision of wealth. But perhaps, after all, the jeweller designed merely to joke with him. For a moment his hilarity vanished, and he again carefully perused the goldsmith's letter. All appeared in sober earnest; and the belief that he actually possessed a treasure, was confirmed by the color of the sand, its weight, and its metallic lustre.

Suddenly, a new thought occurred. Might he not employ several Indians at once, to bring the sand, under pretence of having a largely increased correspondence, since the annual visit to the capital? It is true that his conscience rebelled against a feeling so decidedly avaricious; but to such an extent had it been weakened by the last night's conflict, that it took the Padre no longer time to stifle its voice, than was sufficient to lock up his gold, and put on his hat. His appearance in the village, with his customary benignant smile and easy manners, was hailed with enthusiasm. When

his wish concerning the sand was announced, every one was eager to gratify it; and as the former restriction, dividing the gold-hunters into bands, was removed, a scene ensued such as rarely took place in the village. Each one contended for the honor of going first. The strong claimed the privilege, because they were better able to bear fatigue; the weak, such as rarely stirred beyond the limits of the village, that they might show their love for the Padre. Those who had been there oftenest besought the Father to send them, because they knew the road well; others wished to learn it. Loud talking, wrangling, and disputing, were soon heard in every direction. Women, screaming at the top of their voices, increased the din; and many, unused to such an expression of feeling, joined in, because it was novel. The Padre's voice could not be heard. The new spirit which inspired him, had fallen upon his congregation. The scene was disgraceful, even while confined to words; but at last the passions of the Indian, more powerful from having been long pent up, burst all restraint, and the principal wranglers, seizing their opponents by the ears or the hair, kicked and bit each other with a ferocity known only among an uncivilized people.

For such a demonstration of zeal, the Padre was not prepared. It occurred, too, at the worst time; for his thoughts were bent upon his coming wealth, rather than upon teaching aught that was good, to his congregation. There was but one man whose influence with his tribe might have enabled him to prevent it — Zoamil. But, unfortunately, he was already far on his way; so that the Padre was subjected to the mortification of seeing his congregation engaged in a riot which he had no power to quell.

This scene was not, however, of long duration. When the first ebullition of passion was over, the Indians became aware of their situation, and gradually refrained from their wrangling. The combatants were parted, the exciting noises ceased, and the words of the Padre again inspired reverence. As the Indians grew more and more ashamed of their conduct, the silence grew deeper around; and each expected with trembling the sentence of punishment for so flagrant an outrage. But the old man's reproof was surprisingly mild, and, withal, quickly administered. His thoughts were on obtaining wealth, rather than administering discipline. Six men, named by the Padre, were then despatched with all convenient speed, to the deposit of gold-dust.

The Padre was now fairly embarked in the pursuit of wealth. Only a day had intervened since he learned his good fortune; but in that short time he had lived fast. He had entered upon a life whose hopes were wild and sensual, and its desires intense and intolerable. The struggle with virtue had been violent; but its bitterness was past, and he feared not the expiring efforts which conscience might still make. 'I will dedicate my wealth to the church,' was the argument with which he soothed and deceived himself; and it served well to lull his soul, until avarice could secure her hold upon it. Hence, what had appeared unlawful to touch, only the night before, now seemed the greatest good; and he already wished that he had sent twice as many Indians in quest of the precious dust.

During the six days that Zoamil was absent, the Padre rarely appeared in the village, except when going to the church; but the Indians often observed him standing by the window, looking anxiously toward the mountain in the west. He seemed sick and melancholy; and this, in connection with his whole conduct since Zoamil's return from Mexico, and with the feelings of remorse incident to the late disturbance, filled the villagers

with sadness. Never, since the Padre had come to reside among them, had there been such an estrangement between himself and his people.

At length, Zoamil returned. The bag or pocket in which he usually carried provisions was filled with the yellow sand; and other parcels, of various quantity, were stored about different parts of his person. The old man's eyes sparkled, as the load of wealth was poured in one heap upon his table. Almost involuntarily he ran his fingers through the mass, to ascertain if it was indeed the same substance as that in his box. The movement was not understood by Zoamil.

"It is very fine, Father," said the Indian, imagining that the Padre was examining its suitability as writing-sand. "I sorted it carefully for nearly half a day, and threw all the large pieces out."

"The large pieces!" ejaculated the Padre. "Pieces of what?"

"The big grains, that would spoil your paper. Some were thicker than my finger."

"And you threw them away?"

"I did, Father."

"Oh! holy mother!" exclaimed the old man, dropping the sand and beating his forehead. Zoa-

mil, much alarmed, arose to assist him, supposing that he was sick. The Father ordered him to retire; and the Indian, fatigued, hungry, and disappointed, obeyed. "Fool that I am!" exclaimed the old man. "Waiting and trusting a week, for this miserable pittance!" He paused a moment, and cast a look of contempt upon the pile of riches before him. It was in itself a small fortune; and so the Padre would have acknowledged, but for Zoamil's confession. But another idea occupied his mind. It was that of lumps of the virgin ore, compared to which, the vile dross before him was not worth carrying. "And he threw them away—the large pieces!" continued the Padre, as he stood motionless with vexation and anger. "It is a gold-mine this wretch has discovered;—why did I not think of it before, and tell him to save the large grains?" Too much disappointed to enjoy his new acquisition, he tied it up hastily in a cloth, and throwing it into the box containing the other, sat down to devise some scheme by which the secret of the locality of the gold-mine could be wrung from the villagers. This, however, he was unable to do; and, after many vexatious efforts, he consoled himself with the reflection that the six messengers, who would shortly arrive, would together

bring a sum which would atone, in a measure, for the loss of the large pieces.

The six Indians arrived early on the following morning. It will be remembered that they had been despatched in great haste; a circumstance which had caused the Padre to forget to give the necessary directions concerning the quantity he wished. Each one brought, therefore, only as much as he had been accustomed to do — about a tea-cup-full; so that, altogether, the amount was not near so great as that gathered by the faithful Zoamil. At this fresh disappointment, the Padre's feelings broke forth beyond all restraint. He overwhelmed the Indians with reproaches, ordered them from his presence, and uttered exclamations at which they were greatly surprised. Fortunately for the Padre's reputation, these simple villagers did not understand many of the terms in which he indulged. Alarmed and perplexed, they left his house in haste; and the account of their reception by the Father, which they soon circulated, speedily increased the excitement which by this time had reached a high pitch among the villagers.

The following day was the Sabbath. It was noticed that Zoamil was absent from the village; and during the following week he did not appear.

Father Thomas was not sorry: he knew well the character of this young man, and indulged a secret hope that he might be on a mission after the large pieces of gold.

Nor was the Padre mistaken. Ten days after his disappearance, he again entered the Father's house, laden with treasures which would have gladdened the heart of a viceroy. Ingots of gold, from the size of a pea to that of a chestnut, and thin rolls, which had been melted by lightning or some other cause, and had run into the crevices of the rocks, from which Zoamil had extracted them, together with lumps hidden among crystals of basalt and porphyry, were placed upon the Padre's table.

"God bless you, my Zoamil!" exclaimed the old man, as he grasped at the gold with both his hands.

"Has Zoamil done well?" enquired the Indian, timidly.

"He has done well — my blessing on you," replied the old man, mildly.

"I have more, Father," Zoamil said, gazing steadily in the Padre's face.

"More! where?"

The Indian unfolded a corner of his garment,

and produced a lump of pure gold, as large as his fist. Both the old man's hands were stretched out toward it; and his bony fingers, strengthened though they were by avarice, trembled under the weight of the precious mass.

"Where did you find it?" he asked, involuntarily.

"The rocks were washed by the storm," replied the Indian, in an evasive manner, "and this lump, which had been buried, appeared on the surface."

The old man was loading the Indian with thanks and blessings, when he was interrupted by the mild voice of Zoamil.

"How can the good Father dry his paper with such pieces?"

For such a question the Padre was not prepared; and his confusion might have been perceived by observers less keen than Zoamil. After stammering for a reply, he asked the Indian to take some refreshment.

"Zoamil is not hungry," was the answer. "He was hungry when he last came from the mountains."

There was a biting irony, whether intentional or not, in the answer, which sank into the Padre's mind. A feeling of irritation dashed his former

buoyancy, and he looked enquiringly into the Indian's face. The eye of Zoamil was calm and steady; and the Padre, awakened to suspicions which he had never entertained before, discontinued the conversation, fearing that the young man, mild and affectionate as he appeared, might yet possess sufficient shrewdness to perceive that there was something valuable in the bright substance which the Father so eagerly craved.

This suspicion, weak at first, increased when Zoamil departed. It was true that the Padre had obtained his wish. It was true that the sparkling treasure before him would render him affluent for life. Yet, while his eye rolled over the pile of wealth, his mind was uneasy and dissatisfied: Why did the Indian ask him about drying his ink? How dared he taunt his spiritual father (for it could be but a taunt) because he had not given him food a week before? Then he remembered the small quantity of sand which the other Indians had brought; and to his morbid fancy it was clear that they had done so to vex and tantalize him. "There is a plot among them!" he exclaimed, rising and pacing the floor. "That wretch, Zoamil, is at the head of it!" It is natural for man to hate the one whom he has injured most; and yet the Padre,

entangled as he was in the meshes of the tempter, felt some compunctions while uttering the last sentence. But he was in no mood to obey the dictates of justice; like a tiger in confinement, he strode from side to side of the apartment, lashing his already excited passions by his evil imaginings, and cursing Zoamil for his ingratitude. The wealth which yesterday he had greedily coveted, lay before him unheeded; and he thought only on the revenge he would take on the Indians, the mere prospect of which now appeared to him sweeter than all his treasures.

Such were the feelings which tormented the old man during the whole of that day, and deprived him of all pleasure. After storing away the gold in a large bag, he sat down to devise the best scheme for punishing Zoamil. But to discover an effectual and withal prudent plan to accomplish this, was no easy matter. Zoamil was beloved by his tribe; besides which, the Padre remembered that he was the most useful gold-hunter. Hence, after puzzling his brain a long while, he concluded that any direct attempt upon the Indian would be useless, and resolved to watch the course of events, and seize opportunities to accomplish his object as they presented themselves.

The Indians now made regular excursions in quest of sand and lumps of gold — some bringing more, some less. None of them, however, could hit upon the exact quantity to suit the Padre. Those who brought only sand, were blamed for rejecting the pieces. Those who brought ingots, were chided for not gathering the largest. When a few presented him with lumps, the Padre begged to know where they were obtained; and on the refusal of the Indians to inform him, he drove them from the house. He became gloomy and irritable, and unkind. Sometimes, long after midnight, he was seen, in the light of his dim lamp, pacing his apartment like a troubled ghost. Once he left the village, and followed a party of gold-hunters, until his palsied limbs failed by the way. He was found and carried home by the affrighted villagers. In the church, during service, he fell into strange reveries, and declaimed in strains which caused even the naked Indian boys to stare. Once, when the time of dismissal had arrived, instead of pronouncing the benediction, he suddenly threw his arms over the altar, and looking wildly around, exclaimed: "Oh, do not take it—it's all I have—search for the mine!" Children, instead of pulling his gown, as formerly, ran from him; and the poor

Indian women, who had often blessed him as he moved, with solemn dignity, from the church, now shed tears of sympathy, as they noticed his hurried and infirm gait. A change had come over Father Thomas!

CHAPTER V.

THE GOLD-MINE.

THE thirst for gold had changed the character of the Padre ; but the evil was not confined to him. The villagers also were changed. The cheerful hum of contentment, while at labor ; the sweet song of the Indian mother, as she lulled her babe to rest ; the shouting of the children, as they ran and played among the mountain-cliffs, in the evening ; the hymn of gratitude to the Good Spirit, which the Padre had taught his people to sing every morning at sunrise ; and the words of reverence and love, with which the villagers had delighted to speak to each other of their pastor, were heard no more. Sadness was visible on every countenance. Numbers neglected their employments, to speculate on the conduct of the Padre — the more exciting,

because it was mysterious. They longed to enquire the cause, but dreaded to approach his house. Religious as well as temporal duties were neglected; and their feelings of vexation and grief often broke forth into bickering, accusations, and quarrelling. The influence of Zoamil and other chiefs of the tribe, was generally sufficient to repress these disorders; but it could not restore to the village that quiet which had formerly prevailed.

As to the Padre, his misery increased daily. His covetousness expanded far beyond the abilities of the Indians to supply its demands; and all the gold that was poured into his coffers weekly seemed as nothing to the quantity which he imagined he must yet obtain. The more faithfully the Indians labored to please him, the more was he convinced that they were wilfully prolonging his wretchedness; and nothing could satisfy him but a knowledge of the locality of the gold-mine. To ascertain this, he entreated, cajoled, threatened. He promised to make each family happier than it had ever been, and to confer untold blessings upon those who would disclose the required knowledge. The Indians refused compliance with his wishes; but the Padre was not discouraged. He used every argument that avarice could suggest, and threatened

his people with woe in this life, and endless torment in the next. A few wavered; but Zoamil was firm. New ideas concerning the Padre's character, and the effects of the yellow sand upon his actions, were unfolding themselves to this young chief's mind; and he resolved never to consent to a revelation of the locality of the gold-mine.

But, great as was Zoamil's influence, the desire to gratify the Padre's wishes became stronger and more general. The Indians could not fail to perceive the old man's distress; and, loving him as they did, they were willing to adopt any measure which might alleviate it. But Zoamil labored so successfully against the proposed disclosure, that they agreed at last to postpone it for a few weeks, hoping that some change might take place in the Padre.

Zoamil made but one more excursion to the mountains after this. On returning, he found the old man, as usual, morose and irritable. The sight, however, of a large lump, enveloped in the Indian's mantle, illumined his face with a flush of gladness.

"You have come at last," he said.

"Yes, Father; and God has sent his blessing to you."

Could such a mass be gold? The Padre looked





ZOAMIL'S REMONSTRANCE.

upon it with an expression of intense delight. Zoamil then brought out, from the folds of his mantle, a wide piece of bark, shaped like a dish, and containing cool fruits from the mountains, and a vessel of iced water.

"What is this?" groaned the discomfited old man.

"The gift of God to the good Father," was the answer.

Long was the pause that ensued. Neither moved a limb, while the Padre, frowning like night, stood with his eyes riveted upon the Indian. Furious passions were raging in his bosom, so that he could scarcely refrain from seizing Zoamil by the throat.

"What does this mean?" was his first ejaculation. Rising calmly, the young chief answered:—

"Listen, Father. Many years ago, when the moon was no larger than a little star, the Good Spirit gave this land to the Indians. He planted the maguey, the palm, the lemon, and the bright water, and bade them be happy. Then the Bad Spirit came. He tried to drive them from this good land: but they would not go. He gave them pulque, to make them drunk; but they would not taste it. He planted the poisonous vine and the stinging pear; but they would not eat. Then the

Bad Spirit brought fiery sand, and lumps of solid fire, from the bosom of Popocatapetl, and offered them to the Indians, to burn and madden their minds. But the Good Spirit said, No ; and the Indians turned away. Now listen, Father. The Bad Spirit hid his fiery sand among the mountains, that it might be a bait to men, as the glittering arrow-point is to fishes. There it slept many years, until the young moon had grown to a great size. Then the white men came. They saw the fire-sand, and ran to gather it. The Bad Spirit had not left enough for all, because he wanted them to fight for it. They did fight, and their minds were maddened. O, Father, this is the fiery sand we have brought you. Throw away the Bad Spirit's bait, and let us partake of the good things which God has given his people !”

The Padre now lost all patience. “Who told you this tale ?” he exclaimed, stamping violently upon the floor.

“God,” replied Zoamil, reverently ; pointing upward, and gazing on the old man with a sad expression. The voice and the action of this child of Nature touched the Padre's heart. The memory of his former peace of mind returned, with the bitter reflection, that happiness had departed.

Should he indeed act as the young man had suggested? There was a moment when virtue struggled hard, yet vainly, for mastery.

"Tell me, Zoamil;" he enquired, in an excited tone, "where do you get the yellow sand?"

"Let not the good Father ask," replied the Indian; "it would not make him happy."

"It *will* make me happy!" returned the Padre, vehemently; "I *must* know, and that shortly. You are deceiving and betraying me!"

"Zoamil does not betray his friends," replied the young chief.

"Traitor!" shouted the Padre, "tell me where you obtain the yellow sand!"

"Has it made the Father happier?" Zoamil enquired.

"Leave me — never come back!" ejaculated the Padre.

Zoamil retired; and as he stepped into the porch, he beheld his gift, which had been tossed from the window into the lane which ran beside the Padre's house. "The Bad Spirit is abroad," muttered the chief, as he returned to the village. He had judged rightly.

As the Father continued to grow more importunate, the Indian chiefs again took into consideration

the propriety of revealing their secret. Zoamil was still firm in his refusal; but his opinion was on this occasion overruled, and the chiefs were on the point of despatching one of their number to give to the Padre the required information, when, at that critical moment, Zoamil proposed a new plan. By frequently visiting the neighboring towns and villages, he had learned that gold was much esteemed among the white people; nor was he totally ignorant of the evils which the search after it had entailed upon his countrymen. These reasons, with others understood by his tribe, made him resolve upon using every effort in order to prevent the purposed revelation. After laying them before the other chiefs, with true Indian eloquence, he suggested that the Padre might be taken to the gold-mine, blindfold, and then brought back in the same manner, after obtaining as much as wanted. This was to be on condition that he would never afterwards harass them upon the subject. To this proposition the chiefs unanimously agreed; and two of their number were despatched to make arrangements with the Padre.

He received the proposal with rapture; readily promising that, having once seen the gold-mine, and gathered the sand with his own hands, he

would be satisfied. The two Indians were loaded with blessings; and the following morning, at sunrise, was appointed for the time of departure. The Padre employed the afternoon in hiding his gold in a crevice of the rock, under the foundation of his house. This spot, known only to himself, was so well concealed by a layer of earth, and a thick growth of moss, that it might easily escape the most vigilant search. The remaining time until morning was, of course, passed in a state of feverish anxiety.

At sunrise, eight stout Indians appeared at the Padre's door. They were led by a chief named Tlapatla, who was accompanied by his son, a youth famous for eloquence; so that the party numbered ten in all. The object of their visit had been whispered through the village; and when the Padre appeared at the door, he beheld his whole congregation thronging into the lane to see him depart. He was soon on the shoulders of his guides; and, not being as yet blindfold, he could greet his people as he passed. Many of the Indians leaped for joy, as they beheld their Padre apparently happy once more, and listened to the kind words with which he addressed them.

In a few moments the guides began to ascend

the mountain. On reaching the first cliff, forming the edge of a small table-land, they observed an Indian to spring suddenly from an adjoining crag, and descend rapidly toward the village. It was Zoamil. With a sadness almost prophetic, he had been watching the morning's proceedings in the village. What thoughts the sight had suggested, no one but himself ever knew; but it was observed that from that day he wore an air of contemplative reserve, which he had never before exhibited.

On reaching the summit of the mountain, the Indians paused to allow the old man a short period of rest, and a view of the scenery. A bandage was then placed over his eyes, and the journey recommenced. For more than an hour the motion of the guides, as they moved quickly along, was quite pleasant; and the Padre amused himself with the idea that he would soon be at the gold-mine. But, as the time grew longer, the old man's exuberance of mind diminished. Besides, the road began to grow rough and tortuous. Sometimes one side of his body was lowered, sometimes another. At times, his feet were higher than his head; and often the guides appeared to be moving backwards. A downward passage, which they afterwards commenced, was, according to the Padre's estimation,

endless; but when it did terminate, he felt himself carried backward, and forward, and sideways, until, involuntarily, he raised his hand to prevent his head from striking a rock. A strong arm arrested the movement; and for a considerable time afterwards, he remained motionless. But the difficulties of the way seemed to increase; until, at length, the Padre begged his guides to remove the bandage, if it was merely to let him peep at the surrounding danger. The demand was promptly refused; and, when repeated shortly after, the Padre was reminded that his chance of seeing the gold-mine depended upon his observing the bargain he had entered into. This quieted him for that day; and though the road seemed nothing but mounds and hollows, and the fierce sun burned through his thick cowl, he submitted entirely to his guides. One thing, however, rendered him uneasy. The Indians frequently stopped and whispered together; and he could hear enough of their conversation to know that he was, in some way, the cause of it. Timid and suspicious, he began to fear that, after all, the Indians were deceiving him; and the thought of being carried among rocks and barrancas, for many hours, and then returned to his own door, blindfolded, filled him with fresh vexation.

But, happily for the old man's feelings, he was now too drowsy to pursue a connected train of thought. He had slept none the night before; and this, joined with previous over-excitement and the fatigue of his novel journey, had completely exhausted him. Hence, when the Indians halted, and made preparations for passing the night, the Padre was in a sound sleep.

On the following morning, the Father was already on his journey before he awoke. The travelling was not more pleasant than it had been the day before; and though the old man felt much refreshed, yet he could not divest himself of the doubts and suspicions which had sprung up in his mind. He several times attempted to remove the bandage, but with no better success than the day before. Toward evening, another fear flashed across his mind. Perhaps the Indians designed killing him, in revenge for the harsh manner in which he had treated them; and his former suspicions concerning Zoamil's plot, returned with ten-fold violence. Tormented with such thoughts, the Padre enjoyed no peace during the remainder of his journey; and, strong as was his love of gold, he was several times on the point of begging his guides to return to the village.

But at noon of the third day all his fears vanished, on hearing that the gold-mine was near at hand. Half an hour afterwards, the Indians halted, the old man was set down, and the bandage removed from his eyes. The party were in a cave, whose colossal walls towered upwards into total darkness. A small stream, of crystal purity, bounded over the rocks above, in mimic cataracts, and then stole, in quiet ripples, across the stony floor. On every side, far as the eye could penetrate the dim twilight, the rocks, and their thin deposit of earth, glittered with the golden sand; while pure gold, apparently once melted, filled the crevices; and lumps of the precious metal, pure, or mixed with quartz, porphyry, and other minerals, were scattered in profusion around. As the Padre stooped mechanically to grasp a lump, Tlapatla stopped him, and said:—

“Let the good Father listen. No white man ever saw this cave before. Our Padre wished much to come, and we have brought him—for we love him better than the Indian mother loves her first-born child. Gather all the bright sand you want—let it be enough to make the good Father glad, for here he must never be again. He must shut his eyes on the cave forever; for the Indian will

no more lead the stranger to the secret place of his fathers !”

The Padre immediately commenced his work, and the Indians assisted him. For hours he collected lumps of gold, until he had gathered a pile sufficient to load a lama. The larger lumps he stored about his person, until he was unable to stand under the burden ; still he grasped after the large pieces, and crawled further and further into the darkness, eagerly searching for lumps that were pure. It was not till after sunset, when a deep gloom pervaded the cave, that he ceased his toil. The Indians made preparations for passing the night. They lit torches, ate their simple provisions, and spread a garment for the old man to sleep upon : having first bandaged his eyes, they then grouped themselves around him in such a manner, that during the night he could not move without awakening them.

It was impossible for the Padre and his guides to take with them all the gold that had been collected. But neither the assurances of the Indians, nor the evidence of his own eyes, sufficed to convince him of the fact. He loaded himself with the ore ; and though, at every effort to grasp more, half a dozen pieces rolled off, he still lingered round the pile,

as if his very existence was linked with it. The guides were also encumbered with the gold; and at length their leader declared that he would wait no longer. The old man was again blindfolded almost by force, and raised, with all his gold, on the Indians' shoulders. Thoughts of the wealth he was leaving behind, made him peevish and discontented; and though he held tightly to the treasure in his robe, Tlapatla saw plainly that he was still dissatisfied.

They had not proceeded far, when an abrupt turn caused the Padre to raise his hand suddenly, by which motion he accidentally struck his rosary. All at once it occurred to him, that by untying it, and occasionally dropping a bead, he would create a clue to the discovery of the mine. The rosary was untied with great despatch and secrecy; and the old man, with an exuberance of feeling proportionate to his former despondency, dropped the first bead. No better scheme could have been devised to outwit his simple conductors.

The reader may imagine the details of the journey home, the rejoicings of the villagers at beholding their Padre, not only safe, but apparently happy, and the inward satisfaction of the old man, at having opened a way to the discovery of the

mine. He had already resolved never to disclose his knowledge of the locality either to government or his most intimate friends. Judge, then, of his feelings, when, after emptying his own robe and those of his guides, he beheld, in the outstretched hand of the chieftain's son, the beads that he had dropped by the way ! At such a sight, his fortitude forsook him. Sinking into a chair, he tore his thin hair with both hands, and uttered groans of rage and despair. The interrogations of the affrighted Indians were answered by curses and threatenings ; and the beads, which had been placed upon the table, were, by a convulsive sweep of his hand, scattered over the room. Tlapatla, who had hoped that the Padre's cheerfulness was restored, was utterly confounded, and gazed with astonishment upon the scene before him. One by one, the other Indians stole away ; then there was a long silence, interrupted only by the old man's mutterings, the ebbings of his first wild paroxysm.

"The Father said he would be happy, if we showed him the cave of the yellow sand," said Tlapatla. A growl of scorn and mockery was the only response. The chief was again silent. He did not know enough of the old man's wretchedness to understand the scene he was witnessing ; and

his reverence for the Padre's character prevented him from weighing the full import of his conduct. Several times he ventured to speak; but was abused, silenced, and finally dismissed. All the stores of wealth which the Padre possessed, had not proved sufficient to purchase for him contentment, without which, wealth is but vanity and bitterness.

It will not appear strange, therefore, that he speedily renewed his solicitations to know the situation of the gold-mine. The Indians were perplexed and astonished. The chiefs used every means to divert his mind from the fatal subject. They related their simple, yet warning legends, made him presents, and vehemently entreated him to forget the yellow sand. All were in vain; and at length the old man, wholly absorbed in his riches, neglected the ceremonies of the church, and remained almost entirely in his dwelling. The flock was left without a shepherd; so that disorder and distress appeared where all had been happiness. Violent broils occurred in the village; many of the Indians neglected their labor, and entered upon a course of habitual indolence and viciousness; and though the chiefs exerted themselves to repress these disorders, their success was only partial. A

few, imagining, from the greediness of the Padre, that the gold-dust possessed supernatural qualities, repaired to the cave, gathered large quantities, and secreted it in their houses. But this business was promptly stopped by Zoamil and his fellow chiefs; who ordered the dust to be returned, and the offenders punished. It was further determined, that no one was, in future, to bring anything from the cave, even for the Padre.

CHAPTER VI.

THE FRUITS OF AVARICE.

ALL the entreaties and threats of the Padre, for the purpose of obtaining from the Indians their secret, were vain ; and, to increase his wretchedness, the villagers brought him no more gold. The condition of his mind was pitiable ; and his health, unsupported by the vigor of manhood, was unable to resist the inroads of his mental disorder. His countenance became haggard, his appetite failed, and his whole frame shook, at times, as if stricken with palsy. His habits, formerly regular, were revolutionized. Through the day, he sat for hours over his gold ; yet lost in revery, while scheming for more. At night he roamed, long after midnight, from room to room, holding a lamp in one hand, and often a piece of gold in the other ; but

without object or direction. Often he paused suddenly, and stared as though before a spectre; and once or twice his tortured soul uttered a shriek, which was plainly heard by those villagers who, at night, watched anxiously his motions. His short, troubled sleep, afforded no refreshment; for, whether sleeping or waking, he was haunted by the strong demon, of whom his mind was the dwelling.

When the Padre became convinced that further entreaty with the Indians was useless, it occurred to him, that by apprizing government of the existence of the mine, measures might easily be adopted for its discovery. It is true, this plan was at first rejected; but after another interview with the chiefs, it appeared to be the only course he could adopt. But for days and weeks the old man hesitated. It was true, he would receive a reward for the intelligence; it was true, he would obtain a per-centage of the gold, should it be found; it was certain that, beside this, every other scheme he could devise would be futile. Yet he would not receive all; and that thought was misery. That the gold-mine was his, he did not for a moment question; and hence he resolved on making another effort, useless as it appeared, with the Indians. For this purpose, he invited the principal chiefs to

his house. Zoamil alone was absent. The Padre delivered a set oration, replete with the uses — all false — to which the yellow dust could be applied by him, and concluded with the old request. The Indians, who had listened attentively, shook their heads. He entreated, using every argument he could think of; but in vain. Then the old man, forgetting all sense of dignity, wept, prayed, and lastly, falling upon his knees, and clasping the hand of Coyopel, the oldest chief, conjured him, with cries and sobs, to reveal the secret. At first, the Indians were surprised; that feeling now gave way to contempt — the only time they had exercised it toward their pastor. Coyopel, erecting himself to his full height, glanced at the priest, and replied: —

“Rise, Padre, and listen. The Good Spirit made the star-mountain beautiful; but it rebelled against him, and hurled its fire into the sky. But the Good Spirit never yielded to it. He roars among the clouds, like the lowing of the buffalo, till the proud mountain becomes mute. The Good Spirit never bends. But the Padre has bent, like the little rushes of the water-brooks, when Autumn winds blow on them. He has bartered his big heart, which the Good Spirit gave, for the yellow

sand, and now he has only heart enough for a papoose. Coyopel is sad for the Padre, because he is no longer a man. Our ears were open to attend to his commands, but we could not hear them. His voice was weak as an infant's. We can hear only the strong voice of men. Let the Padre whisper no more to the Indian."

The old man sprang to his feet, confounded and ashamed; but before he could speak, the chiefs strode haughtily from the apartment. His influence with the villagers was at an end!

No course remained, but to solicit the interference of government. After another long period of anxiety, he decided to do so; and a letter, written with proper vagueness, as to facts, and affected carelessness as to his opinion of them, was despatched to Mexico. Little did the poor Indian who carried it imagine how deeply involved was the happiness of his tribe with its contents. The news threw the government into a fever of excitement; and, with suitable alacrity, commissioners were despatched toward the Padre's village. His letter had simply stated that some dust, which might be gold, had a few months before been given to him; and that the Indians knew where there was more, but would not tell. "As a servant of

Jesus," continued the letter, "I have nought to do with the wealth which makes for itself wings and flies away; yet, as holy Peter, of old, paid worldly tribute, not despising the customs of men, nor the powers which God hath ordained, so I deem it my duty to apprize you of these facts, so that the dust (if there be any more) may be appropriated to the honor and advancement of the Blessed Church."

As soon as he had despatched this letter, the Padre brought out all his gold, and after getting it to the lower apartment of his house, stored most of it under the rock. The remainder he concealed in various crevices and sly corners, known but to himself. A small quantity of the dust, well mixed with common sand, was poured into his sandbox, and placed on a conspicuous part of his desk. This, he hoped to persuade the agents of the government, should they come, was what remained of the handful he had received.

The expected visitors did not keep the Padre waiting. Four commissioners, fully authorised to investigate the matter, arrived at the village, and repaired to the old man's dwelling. The Padre welcomed them cordially, although inwardly he regretted that he had not, after all, kept his secret from government. The Padre told his artful tale,

and exhibited his sand. Whether the men detected the falsehood in his manner, or were guided merely by curiosity, they asked many questions of a most searching nature; so that long before their examination was over, the old man had additional reason for regretting his imprudence. It was then determined that the chiefs of the tribe should be assembled, and tempted with trinkets and similar presents to make the required disclosure. Should this fail, harsher means were to be adopted.

The excitement in the village, at the appearance of the commissioners, was very great. Groups of men assembled in various quarters, and discussed the probable meaning of such an uncommon visitation. Some thought that they were medicine-men, whose object was to restore the Padre's peace of mind. Laborers, idlers, and women, flocked from all quarters to see them; and most of the children, who had never seen any white man but Father Thomas, clapped their hands with joy, shouting that they were to have four more Padres. The general feeling was that of pleasure; for it was fondly imagined that the appearance of the commissioners was in some manner connected with the old man's restoration.

While rumors to this effect were circulating

through the village, the commissioners invited the chiefs to the proposed conference. On that occasion, every means was employed to cajole or frighten them into compliance. They sternly resisted; even refusing a second meeting. The exertions of the agents, among the other villagers, met with no better success, and in a very short time all intercourse between the Indians and the commissioners was closed.

The latter had not anticipated this result; and their rage was in proportion to their previous anticipations of success. They had become convinced of one fact — that a gold-mine was in the vicinity; and they resolved that its locality should be ascertained. One of their number was sent to the capital, to solicit a band of men, and instruments of punishment, to be used for the purpose of extorting the secret from the villagers; a strict watch was also kept upon the Padre, whose conduct had now evidently excited suspicion.

The affair had now reached a point which the Padre was not prepared for. It was dangerous for him to speak or to be silent. His influence among the Indians was at an end, which had necessarily stopped the services in the church. His brain was taxed to give a reason for this, when required by

the agents; and often, as he faltered in the account, they appeared to note it in their memories. But other feelings, still more painful, harassed him. Father Thomas was naturally mild and affectionate. We have seen with what ties of love he drew his congregation to him, and taught even children to reverence goodness for his sake. He had fallen — perhaps because his nature was not sterner; yet in his degradation he retained some of his former kindness, which often struggled to restore him. He could weep in secret, when he mused on his scattered flock, and on the pleasant years and the peaceful scenes, all glad, all happy, when he had once acted as a true minister of that God who is Love. Hence, though he frequently broke into paroxysms of anger against the Indians, he never, except in the instance of Zoamil's supposed plot, maintained vindictive feelings against them.

With what feelings of remorse must he have gazed upon the sight of twenty soldiers, completely armed, filing through the pass which opened upon the village from the table-land below, and followed by as many more men, carrying every variety of instrument which the Inquisition ever devised to symbolize eternal torment to the sons of men. At the horrible sight, his brain reeled, a dark mist

settled over his vision, and he staggered backward into a chair. Had the mountain been torn apart, he would have leaped gratefully into the chasm, could it but have closed at once and forever. He arose, and walked backward and forward until his paralyzed tongue found utterance. "Oh! lay it not to my charge!" burst from his agonized heart, as, raising his clenched hands toward heaven, he strove to pray. The attempt was vain; sin hung, like a heavy cloud, between him and his God; and the fiend within mocked the writhings of his victim. Achan could not be forgiven, while the accursed thing lay hidden in his house.

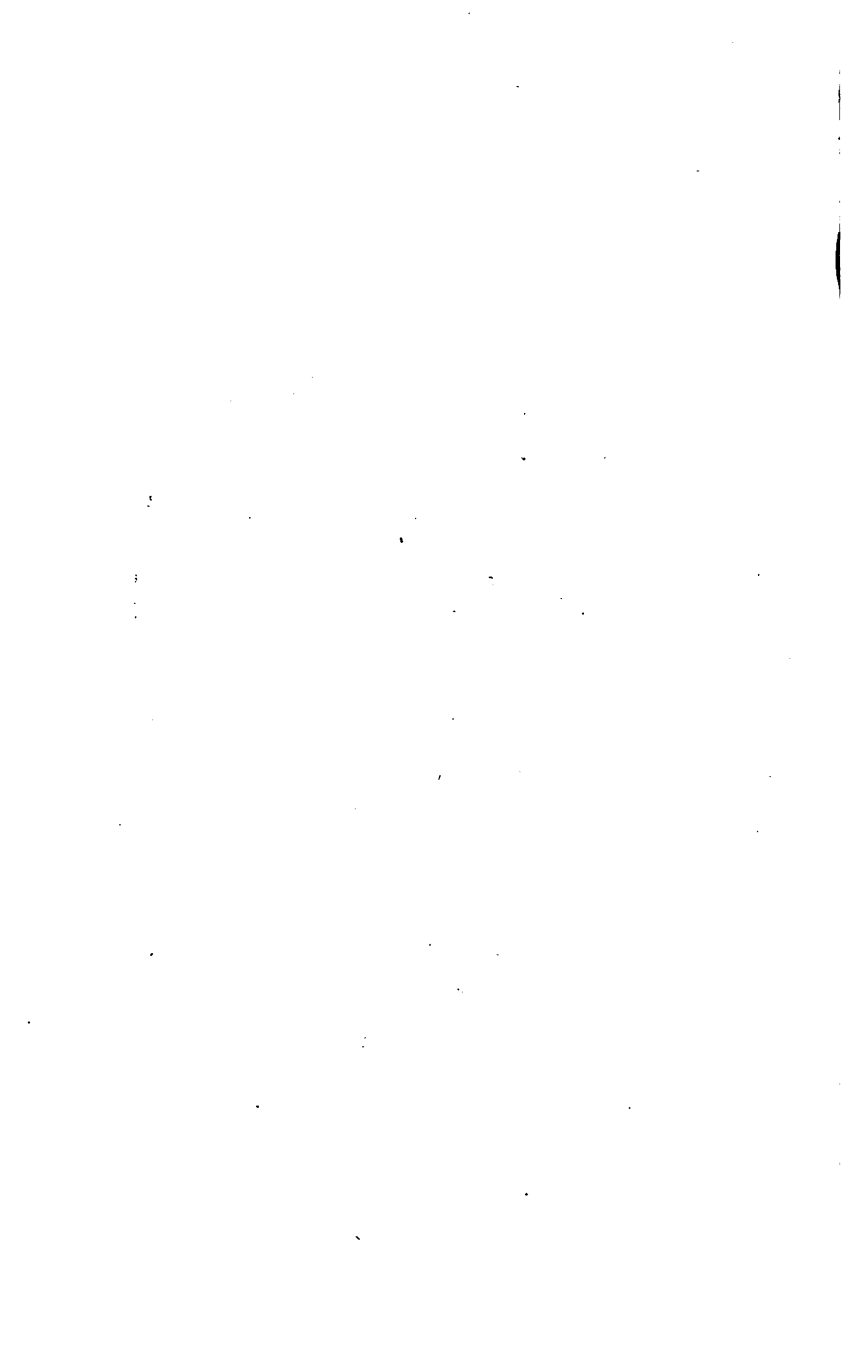
The machinery which the Padre had set in motion had begun to recoil upon himself. His misery was complete and excruciating; nor did he dare to offer his intercession for the alleviation of that of others. The slaves of avarice speedily began their work. Five chiefs, out of eight, were seized and thrown into irons. All who were known to have made an excursion from the village since the commissioners first arrived, were arrested. Those who offered resistance, or endeavored to escape, were whipped through the village, till they fell from exhaustion. Women, the wives and daughters of the chiefs, were branded every night and morning, that

the lingering torture might sap their fortitude. Soldiers and others, well armed, were stationed as sentinels around the village, to prevent any of the inhabitants from escaping. The village, from morning till evening, resounded with cries, lamentations, screams of agony, the wailing of children in quest of their parents, and with the lash of the executioner's whip. But not a word of confession could be wrung from the sufferers.

Meanwhile, ten men had been sent over the mountains to search for the gold-mine. They were absent three weeks; during which time a reinforcement of ten soldiers, and three friars, inquisitors, arrived from Mexico. The search for gold ended in disappointment; a result which exasperated the greedy Spaniards — especially the friars. The five chiefs were immediately brought forward. Confession or the rack was proposed to them. Their silence was understood; and before that day's sun had set, those brave spirits were borne to their dungeon in the church, each an almost shapeless mass of bruised and distorted misery. The wife of Zoamil, taken during the temporary absence of that chief from the village, expired with the intensity of torture; and many others, of both sexes, were executed, or injured so as to render a



ZOAMIL'S WIFE TORTURED.



speedy death certain. The villagers who sought to escape over the mountains were shot. But these proceedings were as ineffectual to further the Inquisitors' object, as promises and threats had been.

In the midst of this persecution, Zoamil and Tlapatla returned from a visit to a distant village, whither they had been sent by their friends. They eluded the vigilance of the sentinels, and by secret paths, known only to the Indians, entered the village at night. Here they beheld the desolation that had taken place, and ascertained that they, with a younger chief, were the only ones to whom the tribe could now look for counsel and assistance. Instead of despairing, they resolved to attempt the rescue of their people. After due consideration, they decided to arrange a plan for their escape from the village. Amid profound secrecy, their preparations were completed the same night; and during the following day every villager was privately warned to be ready on the succeeding night. A trusty band was conducted out of the village, through bye-paths, and stationed in a cave which communicated with a spacious apartment in the heart of the mountain, and directly underneath their dwellings. This, like most of the many caverns of Mexico, had but a small opening, and

was so well hidden among fissures and projecting rocks, that it was impossible for any one, save an Indian, to discover it. It had been long known, however, to the tribe who had built their village over it.

That day more arrests took place, and vigilant search was made for Zoamil's son, Thomas. This child, named after the Padre, was but five years old; yet the Inquisitors could not rest while he was at liberty, as they supposed that, on account of his tender age, they could force from him something that he might have heard from his father, in relation to the mine. The search was vain. A faithful follower of the chief had conveyed the boy beyond the reach of harm. At night, while the Inquisitors were prosecuting their savage work, and the sentinels were on the alert to prevent all escape, a strange din was heard among the mountains. At first it seemed like the hollow rumbling of thunder; then, like the rushing of a cataract. Before the Spaniards could contrive an explanation of the strange circumstance, shouts, as from an entire army, came apparently from a distance, mingled with cries of defiance and hostility, the stamping as of horses, and the clashing of arms. It grew more and more loud, and shifted from place to

place. Now a large force seemed within a few rods of the village; then the noise rolled to another point, and at last appeared to be under the ground. At the same time, lights were seen in every direction, suddenly tossed into the air, and then expiring; but the village was still as death. The Spaniards were filled with alarm; and the soldiers, abandoning their dangerous positions, concentrated their strength near the church; which, should they be attacked, was to serve as a fort. That all the tribes of the neighboring mountains were marching upon them, they did not for a moment doubt; and for two hours they maintained their position, every moment expecting to be attacked. At the end of that time, finding that they were not molested, the soldiers grew bolder, and ventured into the village; at first, singly, afterwards, in a body.

This was the plan of the Indian chiefs, for effecting the escape of their countrymen. As they had calculated, the Spaniards united their forces; which enabled all the women and children, and most of the men, to retire unperceived, through secret paths. Those still detained, had been observed by the Spaniards, when they ventured into the village. Many were seized; but, fortunately for the captives, the soldiers had exhausted their ammunition,

in efforts to drive away the phantom army ; so that their arms were now unloaded. Fierce scuffles ensued ; in which the Indians, from their knowledge of the ground, generally had the advantage. Their brave chiefs were at every point, charging the invaders, dashing heavy stones upon them, and tearing the captives from their grasp. Several on both sides were killed ; and amid the darkness of the night, the shouts of the combatants, the uproar in the mountains, and the occasional discharge of musketry, the soldiers were thrown into confusion. The Indians, once aroused, fought like wild beasts ; and but for their want of arms, would have taken fearful revenge for their wrongs. Suddenly, however, the struggle ceased, and the villagers, favored by the darkness, glided rapidly away. Their end was obtained : they and their friends had been rescued from persecution ; while the Spaniards, too much bewildered to follow, contented themselves with a few discharges of fire-arms, and then returned to the church. Six of their number were missing. Their bodies, with those of the dead Indians, had been carried away by the villagers.

The rage of the Inquisitors at this unexpected affair, and at the escape of the Indians, knew no bounds. The few who remained in their hands

were put to death, by excruciating torments; and for a week the soldiers scoured the neighborhood, in quest of the fugitives. Not a trace of them could be found; and the secret of the gold-mine was as far from discovery as ever. One singular circumstance afforded a faint hope. Every day, at irregular intervals, an Indian, known to be a chief, by his majestic bearing, was seen among the mountains. Sometimes he approached quite near, and was twice fired at. Signs of friendship were made to him, but he regarded them with indifference. To secure him was regarded, by the old friars, as of the first importance; and various schemes were devised to effect it. He eluded them all; and though fifty armed men were in pursuit, he was still seen, sometimes in the morning, sometimes at sunset, gazing upon the deserted village. It was supposed that he entered it at night, and listened to the conversation of the soldiers and others.

CHAPTER VII.

THE PADRE ARRESTED.

AMID the movements of those who had taken the business of the gold-mine into their own hands, we have for a while lost sight of the Padre. He had remained shut up in his dwelling, exposed to the torments of a conscience fully awake to the sense of its guilt. Without, he saw the deserted huts of these poor people, silent as the grave; around him he heard the screams of wretches on the rack, and the hoarse groans of those whose spirits could not be broken. And then, in the remembrance of who had turned what was once the garden of the Lord, into an Aceldama, the old man's frame grew more nervous, remorse upbraided him with his perfidy, and his mind began to dream the horrible visions of the maniac.

About a week after the escape of the villagers, the Padre sat, as usual, alone in his apartment. It was night. Heavy clouds shrouded the mountain in pitchy darkness, and the wind went moaning sadly up its sides. All at once the old man thought he heard a noise as of somebody creeping stealthily into the house. He listened. There was silence, and then the same mysterious sounds. Fearful of everything, he did not dare to raise his eyes to the door. The noise continued for awhile, and then some one pushed open the door and entered. The Padre uttered a cry of fear, and turned mechanically toward his visitor. It was Zoamil. Thin and haggard, he was but the shadow of the noble young chief who, a year before, had been the pride of his tribe. Yet his eagle eye was the same; and for a few moments it was fixed upon the priest with an expression of pity and sadness. That look might have convinced the old man that no harm was intended him; but he could no longer appreciate kindness, and the sight of one whom he had so deeply injured, threw him into convulsions of fear.

"Let not the Father tremble," said the chief, tenderly; "Zoamil is still his friend."

These were the first words of kindness that th-

old man had heard for many days. He covered his face with his hands, and burst into tears. What a luxury to his seared heart was the dew of grief!

"Listen, Father," continued the Indian. "Let the Indian mother weep over the grave of her boy, but this is the time when men must act. The pale-faces have climbed to the mountain-cliff, and torn our tribe from its peaceful nest. To-morrow, Father, they will call for thee!"

"For me!" exclaimed the priest, starting to his feet.

"To-morrow," Zoamil continued, "they will search this house for the yellow sand, and question the Padre in the church, as they did the friends of Zoamil."

"O God, O God!" ejaculated the priest, striking his forehead with his hand.

"Fly with me, Father!" exclaimed the young chief. "I will bear you on my shoulders to a home brighter and holier than this."

"And my treasure — my yellow sand — we can carry it together!"

"Never!" exclaimed the Indian, with startling energy. "The curse of the Padre's God be on it!"

The old man's countenance lowered. A dark suspicion crossed his mind — the Indian had been sent to entice him away, that his house might be robbed. It was an absurd notion ; but trifles light as air, are confirmations to the jealous.

"I will not leave my treasure," he replied. "Let the friars come ; I do not fear them."

"Oh, Father, come with me," urged the faithful Zoamil. "We will be happy again, as when the babe was taught to lisp the Padre's name, and the proud chiefs of Pachuca kneeled around the good Father, to hear from his lips of the Good Spirit!"

"Take me to the cave," was the fierce reply, "and I will go with you!" Zoamil shook his head. "Then fly, yourself!" added the priest, whose avarice was now fully aroused. "You are a deceiver and a traitor!"

"Zoamil never deceives," the chief answered. "When his tribe, and his friends, and the bride of his love, were around, he taught them to honor and reverence the Padre. He named his son after the good Father. He crossed the burning desert by day, and slept at night among the snows of the mountains, that he might gather the yellow sand. Afterwards, he told the Padre that it would burn his brain, and his words were true. Now, Zoamil

has no tribe. They have wasted away as the first snow of the valley. His wife was torn from her home by the cruel white man. But she died bravely, as the spouse of Zoamil should die, and her spirit now waits for her chieftain. His boy was spared to see his father; he sprang to meet him with cries of joy, and died in his arms. The Good Spirit folded him in His robe, that he might not witness the wasting of his race. We buried him where the white man will never tread; and Zoamil felt that he was alone. Yet he thought of the Padre, and trembled, because he knew the white man's greed. While they hunted for his life, he lingered among the mountains, that he might know the good Father's fate. He heard it to-night. His words are true: fly with me, Father, for Zoamil cannot betray you!"

"Leave me!" exclaimed the old man, strongly agitated. Zoamil paused, and the command was repeated.

"Then we part forever!" and the lips of the chief quivered with emotion, as he said: "But the Padre will think of Zoamil, when he is far beyond the sound of his voice. The Indian will soon pass away, who was called a traitor by his friend. He is tottering as the vine, when the palm which it

had embraced is seared by the lightning. Sometimes, too, the Good Spirit sends his wife and boy, to talk with him at night of the happy land, and to say, 'Come, Zoamil, come!' He will soon be with them; for he loves the Padre's God. Let the Father tremble; for Zoamil has bidden him farewell!"

The young man disappeared, leaving the Padre to his own reflections upon this singular interview. They were perplexing, harassing, painful. He could not shake from his mind a conviction of Zoamil's honesty, and the consequent dread of the anticipated visit. In the morning, his fears were confirmed by the arrival of the Inquisitors.

From the examination of the Indians, the friars had learned that considerable gold had been given to Father Thomas; and that it was secreted in his dwelling appeared evident from his singular conduct. On account of his profession, they determined to begin their charge, by the accusation, opportunely afforded, of his having neglected his priestly duties. This was to be followed by the graver charge, of secreting wealth about his house, for improper purposes. The old man stoutly denied both charges. But the first was *proven*, at least to the satisfaction of the friars; and in order to sub-

stantiate the second, the Padre's dwelling was ransacked. The search was vain; but Father Thomas was removed to one of the apartments of the church. Care was taken that he should previously be conducted through the cell which contained the instruments of torture.

But a sentence more appalling than the Inquisitor's had already been issued against the Padre. In the course of our story we have contemplated him, happy and beloved, in the midst of his people: we have detected the first emotions of avarice; and traced them, increasing and strengthening, until they became the only impulses of his will. We have seen how unrestrained desire swelled into crime, and how crime begot its own punishment. The measure of that punishment was yet to be filled!

On the succeeding morning three men came to conduct him to the Inquisitors' presence. They beheld him crouched in a corner of the apartment, like a wild beast, while his eyes glared at them with an unnatural lustre. Upon being requested to follow them, his only answer was a loud laugh.

"Rise!" repeated the Spaniard, "and come with us."

"Ha, ha, ha!" shouted the Padre. "Zoamil's





FATHER THOMAS IN PRISON.

word was true. They burned his brain with sand, and killed his boy !”

“The friars desire your attendance,” said one of the men, not comprehending the scene before him. “This conduct will offend them.”

“Let them come — come — come !” screamed the old man, as he sprang to his feet, and tossed his arms wildly. “Zoamil will carry me to the cave. His wife is waiting there to receive my blessing, and gather gold-dust all the day !”

One of the Spaniards hastened to the Inquisitors’ chamber, crying that Father Thomas was mad. The Padre’s apartment was soon full.

“All the day — all day — all day,” murmured the old man. “Sing psalms and gather gold-dust. Fool ! fools ! and blind ! He lost his rosary when the strong demon was on the mountains.”

“Father !” exclaimed a soldier overcome by the scene.

“Ha, ha ! ha, ha !” he shouted. “They will never find it — never ! Who says Zoamil’s a traitor ?”

With much difficulty, he was removed to the cell of torture. Here the friars, long unaccustomed to feelings of humanity, would have begun their hellish work, under pretence that the Padre

was feigning madness. The proposition was rejected with indignation, by the commissioners; while the soldiers threatened to interfere, should the old man receive the least injury. He was, however, closely confined; and during five days raved in a manner which brought tears to the eyes of his attendants. Suddenly reason returned. A strong arm was drawing him to the tribunal of his God. Yet even at that solemn period he clung to his secret, and for hours resisted the promptings of conscience. At length he called the commissioners to his bedside, and in a voice scarcely audible, told where his wealth was concealed. They repaired to the spot, found the treasure, and brought it to the church. At sight of it, the dying Padre was forgotten. The soldiers demanded the immediate division of it; the friars claimed each a fifth; and the commissioners asserted their right to apportion it. The Inquisitors moved for a postponement, hoping thereby to secure more for themselves; the soldiers threatened to use force, unless the division took place on the spot. High words were succeeded by curses and shouts of defiance. Men, degraded by indolence and vice, bared their arms, and dared their comrades to battle. Soldiers, whose features showed the deadly passions in their bosoms, drew

their swords for mortal strife. All reverence for rank or habit was flung to the wind; and one of the monks, whose avarice had got the better of his prudence, was seized by his cowl, and dragged from the apartment, by an exasperated soldier. The commissioners, with all their efforts at conciliation, seemed unable to prevent a deadly fray.

"O God, my God!" gasped the dying priest.

"Seethe his tongue!" shouted a soldier, as he shook his fist in the Padre's face; "this is your work — yours!"

"O confess me — the sacrament," he murmured.

Still the din increased; and the soldiers were pacified only when the friars were excluded from all share of the gain. The commissioners reserved one-fifth for government, and divided the remainder equally between themselves and their men.

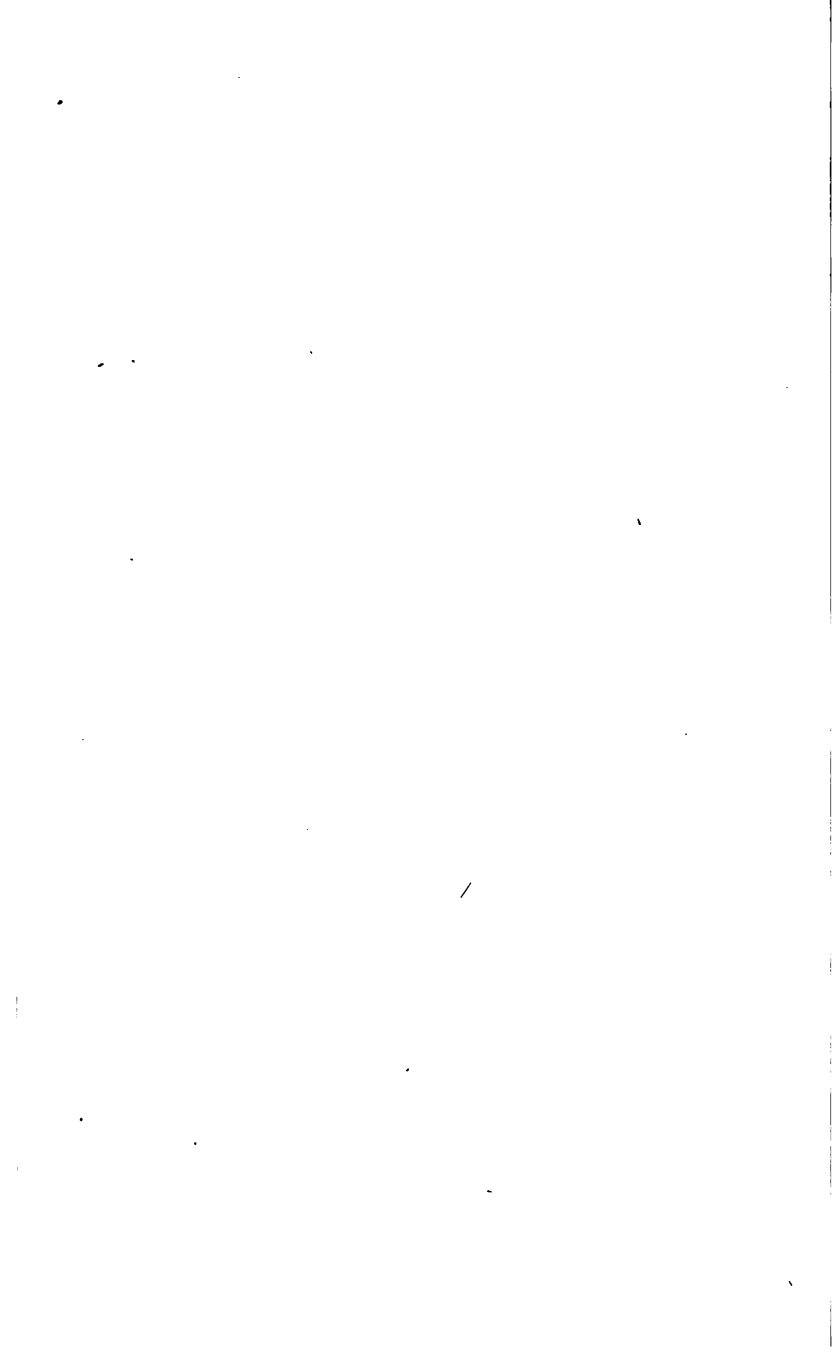
When the tumult had subsided, one of the commissioners went to look at Father Thomas. The Padre was dead!

The Father's wealth proved of as little benefit to its recipients as it had been to himself. The existence of the gold-mine was now proved beyond a doubt; and its richness was demonstrated by the quantity found in the Padre's possession. The soldiers resolved not to leave the neighborhood

until they had found it; and for weeks and months they toiled among rocks and barrancas, in quest of El Dorado. Some lost their way, and were never heard of; some died of heat and fatigue; and many were cut off by the Indians. Few, indeed, and poor and broken-spirited, were those who, of the entire number, returned to the capital. Since that time, government agents and adventurers have searched diligently for the hidden treasure; but their labors have been without success. The Indians of the Cordilleras have themselves lost all knowledge of its locality; but they tell the dusty traveller who toils upward from the plains, that the spirits of Zoamil and his fellow chiefs guard the entrance of the mine from all intruders.

TRUE RICHES.

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THE OLD MISER.

TRUE RICHES.

CHAPTER I.

THE MISER.

DAILY experience teaches how little wealth, if sought as an *end*, and not as a *means*, tends to promote real happiness. History records innumerable instances where the love of gold has brought misery and distress on nations and individuals; and every day tells us some new story of life or health sacrificed in the pursuit of wealth; each new seeker fancying that to him, at least, it will bring happiness.

In the last few years, the pursuit of gold has left numerous once happy homes desolate, and the bones of many a loving father, idolized husband,

or affectionate brother, bleaching on the distant sands of California; his last moments, perhaps, spent in heart-rending regrets for the home, however humble, which he had left to seek for gold; — obtained, perhaps, but bringing no enjoyment to its possessor.

In all large cities, there are found many who make the acquirement of money, for its own sake, the sole object of this life; some, of course, more engrossed than others. They do not find ‘True Riches,’ who work solely to fill their coffers, and never permit the golden stream to flow out again, to gladden the hearts of others. The best part of many a man’s nature,—the once loving heart; the kind, sympathetic feeling, which forms the only true wealth,—is buried and riveted down to sordid gain, by golden chains.

The prayer of Agar — “Give me neither poverty nor riches” — should be the supplication of every one who wishes to do good to his fellow-man; for while poverty cramps the energies, and arrests the hand which would willingly be held out to relieve the suffering, so do riches, if not worthily employed, clog up and destroy, for want of use, the kindly feelings which should prompt man to assist his neighbor.

In speaking of poverty and wealth, Jean Paul says: "In an age, all the better sinews of which have been cut asunder, save only the universal one of money, even the most exaggerated depreciation of riches is nobler and more useful than the justest censure of poverty; for pasquinades upon gold-dust assure the rich man that his happiness is not dependent on his possessions; and to the poor man, for bitter feelings they substitute the sweetness of conquering them. As it is, everything mean in us, — all the senses, the imagination, and all we look up to as examples, — are united panegyrists of gold."

It is certain that the miser's gold cannot be called true riches; for it affords him no enjoyment, save in its accumulation, and spreads no blessings on those around; it is coveted for itself alone, and spreads no kindly atmosphere in its neighborhood.

In a small town in Massachusetts, not far from its capital, there stood, several years since, on the main road, a small, dingy-looking house, so dilapidated and desolate in appearance, that one would hardly suppose it probable that a human being would voluntarily seek its shelter. It was without

any appearance of comfort or care; the roof was covered with moss, the chimney broken down, and old rags and rough boards supplied the place of glass, which had been in the windows once, but had never been replaced after being broken. The door swung on bits of leather, for want of hinges; and all that remained of the fence was rotten with age and neglect. No trees shaded it; but all around had a bare, comfortless look, which created a feeling of pity for such extreme poverty as would be obliged to seek shelter there.

In this miserable abode, hardly fit for a refuge for the beast of the field, there lived, for some years, an old man; all alone, for he had no children or relations. He was very seldom seen by any one; but if by accident a glimpse was caught of the tenant of this cheerless abode, his appearance was such as to render it doubtful, for a time, of what sex he was. An old, tattered dressing-gown, often a woman's skirt, and an old bonnet, in place of a hat, formed his usual costume. He was, to all appearance, a miserably poor old man; he accepted the smallest piece of money with all the greediness of a beggar, and many a charitable person bestowed alms on him; judging, from his wretched appearance, that he must be suffering

from want. But that this was not the fact was well known to all the neighborhood. The rumors of his wealth had waxed louder and louder, until he was looked upon as a walking gold-mine; and many greatly exaggerated stories of his enormous riches were constantly in circulation. But how he first acquired his money was still a mystery; for he had left the Almshouse of his native village when a very young lad, without friends or relatives to care for him, or push him forward in his future career.

Had those who knew Joseph Wilson, studied his character at all, they would have seen even then, in the boy, the dawning of that excessive avarice which afterwards formed so conspicuous a trait in his character.

If by chance, at this early period of his life, a penny came into his possession, it was hoarded carefully, and no temptation would induce him to part with it. If an old garment was bestowed on him, he would immediately endeavor to sell it, however great his need; and an extra meal, offered by the charitable, he would, if possible, try to trade away for two or three copper coins.

Upon his leaving the Almshouse, he begged his way to Boston, and arrived there, barefooted,

ragged, and hungry, without knowing where he should pass the night, or being acquainted with a single person in the city. For many weeks his only place of rest was either in some lumber-yard, or in unfinished dwellings; and his food generally consisted of what he begged during the day.

While in those parts of the city where the poorer class usually dwelt, his attention was directed to one mode in which their children occasionally obtained a little money, and he resolved to try his fortune in the same manner. A price, though a trifling one, was paid for bits of iron and rags; and, indeed, almost any article found a purchaser in those abodes of want, if offered cheap.

He accordingly commenced wandering about, in search of these treasures; and as he brought to his employment, poor though it was, a determined will, his success was much greater than that of the other children.

Every penny was carefully hoarded, and never used, however great the necessity. He would have starved, rather than touch his savings. On some days his earnings would be very small, but at other times he would be more fortunate; and frequently the charitable passer-by would bestow a small sum on the miserable-looking boy. Had the

giver studied the countenance of the lad, he would have read in it, not want, so much as avarice. He usually procured his food by doing little services for the neighbors, who were not able to give him money, but could spare enough to feed him, after providing for their own families. He was not particular in his tastes. A crust of dry bread would keep him from starving; and of dainties and luxuries, such as money could buy, he knew nothing.

After some little time spent in this way, his daily gains became so sure that he ventured to rent a miserable little attic room, for which he was to pay by rendering services, no matter how menial, to the owner of the house, who carried on the business of letting lodgings to the poorer classes, at a very low rate. In this little room he gradually collected large quantities of the most wretched articles of clothing; many of which he had obtained from the open lots in the outskirts of the city, on which they had been thrown with refuse articles and dirt; and it was amazing to see the manner in which he would convert an old rag into something like a garment, which would sell for a small sum.

In the Almshouse where his early years had been passed, he had been taught to sew, and also how to mend shoes; and both of these acquirements he

now turned into active use. A blessing they might have been, had their *end* been other than the gratification of his inordinate thirst for money!

Joseph Wilson, or 'Poor Joe,' as he was usually nicknamed, lived in this manner for several years, — lonely and uncared for. He never sought the companionship of other lads of his own age, and would not allow any one to enter his little room. He never engaged in any of their innocent amusements—it was always work; and for what? To add to his little store of money—the only happiness he knew or cared for!

As he grew older, his intense desire for money increased; and as his daily walks had made him well known among the large stores on the wharves, he ventured at last to seek employment from some of their occupants. His appearance, save in his look of poverty, was not disagreeable; and he possessed a mind naturally acute and observing, together with some acquired talents, which might have made him happier, had they been rightly directed.

So far in his career, Joseph Wilson had never been dishonest; that is, he had never actually stolen. How honest he was, in always getting the best of a bargain, and making the need of others minister to his excessive avarice, might well be

questioned. His industry was untiring; his promptness in performing a job soon made him favorably known among the merchants, and he gradually obtained something like regular employment; always insisting on being paid 'cash down,' as he termed it, however small the promised compensation.

For one merchant, in particular, he did a great many little offices; and, from his faithfulness in performing them, the benevolent old man became gradually interested in the friendless boy, and allowed him to go, at his expense, to a night-school, where he would be taught the plainer branches of education. Being naturally bright, the instruction he here received might have made him a useful man, could his energies have been aroused from their gold-bound slumber.

Joseph soon learned to read and write tolerably well, and showed great proficiency in arithmetic. He had previously learned to count accurately; as it was his practice, every night before retiring, to open the box which contained his money, and tell it over with the satisfaction known only to a miser.

He was cleanly in his habits, so far as washing his skin was concerned; and, indeed, his clothes,

miserable as they were, were free from dirt; for water could readily be obtained, and a piece of soap borrowed or begged of a neighbor.

When at the night-school, Joseph had been in the habit of collecting every little piece of slate-pencil, every scrap of paper, and all the ends of candles which he could lay his hands on; and he generally contrived to make some use of them. He would exchange the bits of pencil with the poor children, perhaps, for a piece of bread or meat; and the candle-ends were quite a source of profit, as he melted them up, and then sold the tallow to some of his neighbors.

Joseph very seldom spoke to any one, except when necessity required; his thoughts were continually engaged in one way; talking he considered a waste of time, and amusements were totally disregarded; for he would not have parted with one penny to have seen all the sights of a great metropolis.

When Joseph Wilson was about sixteen years old, the same merchant who had already befriended him, took him regularly into his employ, as a porter; and during the period in which he held the situation, though receiving but a small salary, he faithfully did his duty; feeling sure that the know-

ledge he gained by accurate observation would soon enable him to obtain a higher post.

He remained with this gentleman until his death caused the business to pass into other hands; after which the boy sought a clerkship, which he easily obtained; for his knowledge of business was well understood. That the other clerks in the store would not associate with him, because he was meanly dressed, gave him no uneasiness; for he always consoled himself by the thought,—‘They will gladly seek to know me at some future day; for I will be rich enough to buy and sell them all!’

Joseph’s intelligence and perseverance soon raised him very high in his master’s estimation, and finally induced him to send his young clerk on a voyage to India, in charge of some business connected with the firm. His negotiations proving very profitable, obtained for him the office of supercargo of one of his employer’s own vessels, and after several very successful voyages, he left the merchant’s service, and remained in India for several years. He returned with much wealth. How he acquired it, no one knew but himself; and, perhaps, none cared to know. That he was rich, would satisfy most of those who had intercourse with him; and they thought—if they thought at all—that it was his

affair, not theirs, if the young nabob's money had been gained by the severest extortion, or even by literal robbery and murder !

He commenced business for himself on the same spot where he had begun his mercantile career, a wretched-looking, poorly-dressed boy ; and few, if any, would have recognized, in the rich India merchant, Joseph Wilson, the 'Poor Joe,' who had once been the butt and laughing-stock of the whole neighborhood.

Our young merchant's business, though very extensive, was conducted in the same parsimonious manner, as regarded small things, which had always characterized his dealings. His clerks were paid the smallest possible salary, and every day's absence carefully deducted in the reckoning of their wages, no matter what reason had occasioned the neglect of duty.

Although everybody despised him, and would gladly have avoided any intercourse with him, yet unbounded wealth flowed into his coffers. Everything he touched seemed to turn into gold ; and where the best endeavors of many an upright man of business utterly failed, he would double and treble his gains.

His miserable home, if it deserved the name,

was still in the wretched street where he had first lived, after arriving in the city; and although he occupied a rather better apartment than that which had afforded him shelter when a boy, yet it was wholly without comfort. A hard pallet bed, a bare floor, and windows without either curtain or shutter, contented the sordid merchant. He never allowed himself fire or light; but would sit by those of his landlord, until obliged to go to bed, which he generally did in the dark. Not a book or paper was to be found in his cheerless abode; and he would have grudged the payment of a single cent for a newspaper, even to obtain tidings of his richly-freighted vessels. He read the papers by borrowing of his business neighbors; and often boasted that his reading cost him nothing.

Had Joseph Wilson perused one Book, he might have learned "how hardly shall they who have riches enter into the kingdom of God." But to him that Book had always been sealed, as he had never been taught in early childhood, by the loving voice of a tender mother or respected father, about him who, when on earth, told his disciples that it was "easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Heaven."

The miser's excessive avaricé showed itself in his always endeavoring to have all labor, performed for him, done at the smallest expense, and the payment delayed as long as possible. He 'ground the faces of the poor.' If a piece of work was finished for him, particularly if done by a female, he would argue for a long time, if possible, on the extravagant price, and would generally manage to make the poor laborers depart with a few cents less than they had anticipated.

Jean Paul, from whom we have before quoted, speaking of those who wish work to remain unpaid for as long as possible, though not always from an avaricious feeling, says justly: "But before you, great and rich, who, helpless in the honeycombs of your enjoyment, and with clammy wings swimming in your fluid sugar of roses, find it so difficult to stretch forth your hands and take out of your money-rolls the wages of those who helped to fill your reservoirs of honey — before you an hour of judgment will hereafter appear, and ask you whether ye were worthy to *live*, not to speak of *enjoying*; shunning, as you did, even the slight trouble of *paying*, while the poor man submitted to the heavy task of earning. But ye would be better, if ye did but think of the misery occasioned among

the poor by your comfortable indolence, and unwillingness to open a roll of coin, or read a short account, if ye were to picture to yourselves the start of inconsolable disappointment, when a wife sees her husband return home without his wages, and the want, and the blotting out of so many hopes, and the sorrowful days of a whole family."

And many such scenes were occasioned by the miser's refusal, under all sorts of pretences, to pay those who had labored hard for their poor reward. Curses, 'not loud, but deep,' were uttered in many a miserable abode; while, perhaps, a sick wife or famishing child pined in want, from his withholding the hard-earned money due to the father of the family.

But he, the "man of gold," never troubled himself about such matters. *He* had done without all comforts, and why not they? They were no better than he was. *He* was never sick; what business had poor people to be sick? for his part, he believed their tales of distress were all lies, made up to extort money from the industrious.

One means of increasing his wealth he had early resorted to; and disgraceful it is, that many a rich man, besides Mr. Wilson, should resort to such measures for amassing wealth. He bought up, at

low rates, every little shanty and poor dwelling-house that came to his knowledge, and then rented them out at exorbitant prices. He was constantly dunning and dispossessing his poor tenants, and often deprived them of their last farthing. On one occasion, and we hope, for the sake of humanity, the only one, he actually turned into the street, on a bitter cold afternoon in mid-winter, a poor family, who had no place of shelter. The father, who was disabled by rheumatism, a delicate, ailing wife, with three young children, and an aged grandmother, were all compelled to encounter the cold and snow of a December night! For what? — Because they could not add a dollar to the already abundant store of the miser's wealth!

When the unfortunate family reached the street, without any knowledge of where they were to find shelter for the night, and signs of great distress were visible on their countenances, the aged grandmother turned suddenly to Mr. Wilson, who was standing near, and said to him, in a voice which rang in his ears for many a day afterwards, "May the curse of the widow cling to you through life; may you know the stings of poverty; and may conscience, which will not always be silent, make your death-bed as miserable as you have made us; may

your spirit seek in vain a resting-place, tortured and harassed by despair, such as you make us now to suffer! Think of us, hardened and wretched man, when about to enter the presence of your God!"

The curse was never forgotten by the miser, although he endeavored to disregard it; but fearfully it came back to him in after years.

The miser had purchased, in the neighboring villages, several miserable old hovels, such as we have described in the beginning of our story, and visited each of them at intervals, and always without giving notice of his coming to the poor persons having them in charge, thereby hoping to detect some useless expenditure, which would warrant him in discharging them at once.

In order to evade the payment of taxes on his hoarded money, he would contrive to avoid the appearance of residing in any particular town, when the first day of May, the time for assessing the tax on personal estate, came round. The assessors could not catch him in any of the houses which he owned in different towns, and occasionally made his residence. But on one of their visits, after being many times disappointed, they thought they detected a faint smoke issuing from one of his dilapi-

dated dwellings. The assessors knocked at the door for some time, and at length the old woman who usually resided there, in charge of the house, partly opened it. "Is Mr. Wilson here?" they enquired. "Oh, no sir; he is not here," said the old woman, trembling at the thought of her master's anger. "But we think he is here, and we shall certainly search the house, if you do not answer us truly," returned the men.

After delaying her answer as long as she possibly could, she finally confessed that he had been there the night before. They proceeded up stairs, resolved to see for themselves whether he was then in the house. The miserable old man was found crouching in a corner of the attic, trembling with terror at the thought of parting with any of his idolized gold. Without waiting for them to speak, the sordid wretch fell on his knees, exclaiming, "Oh, gentlemen, dear, good gentlemen! do have mercy on me, and don't tax me for more than two hundred thousand dollars!"

"We had never supposed you worth more than one hundred thousand, Mr. Wilson," said one of the assessors, "and we are much obliged to you for the valuable information you have given us."

The rage and despair of the miser at thus over-

reaching himself, may be easily imagined. Still he had made a false return; for his personal property at that time was double what he represented it to be.

In each of his miserable abodes were collected quantities of just such garments as he used to accumulate on his first starting in the world; and, not content with his own possessions, he actually coveted, and had been known to take the hat and coat from a scarecrow in a field of corn! The old man frequently boasted that he made a single pen serve him for months, and that it never cost him anything for ink, as he manufactured such as answered his purpose, in a way only known to himself.

Some instances of his avarice are hardly credible; but they are well known and remembered in the neighborhood where he chiefly resided, and were often related to wondering listeners, when the fact of his great wealth became known, and enquiry was busy concerning his past life.

Mr. Wilson had never sought to know whether he had any relatives; being well aware that if any were living they must be poor, and perhaps their necessities might make them think that they had a claim on him for assistance, and he would more

willingly have known that they were starving, than have given them a dollar.

As he advanced in years, however, and his increasing infirmities warned him daily that he must soon die, and his great wealth pass into other hands, he became anxious to ascertain if there were any members of his family still in existence. He slightly remembered a sister, who was taken from the poor-house when very young, and carried into a neighboring State, to be brought up by some friends, but of her after life he had no knowledge; his parents' death, soon after her departure, leaving him no home but the Almshouse, and his subsequent miserly career never allowing him time or inclination to inquire if she still lived.

But as the miser was well aware that death was slowly but steadily approaching, the necessity of immediately finding an heir to his wealth induced him to make very strenuous efforts to ascertain if he had any relatives then in existence; and after considerable difficulty he ascertained that a nephew, the son of his sister, was living in a neighboring State; he had a family, and was in very moderate circumstances.

Charles Prescott, his nephew, owned a small farm, which he had inherited from his father, and

which enabled him, with very strict economy, to support his family. He well remembered hearing his mother mention a brother whom she had left at home, and of whose life, after leaving the Alms-house, she had not been able to gain any knowledge.

The old man immediately wrote to Mr. Prescott, desiring him to come to him as soon as possible after the receipt of his letter; but a week or more elapsed before his nephew was able to leave home, and in that time the miser had failed very rapidly; yet his increasing infirmities had not induced him to make any alteration in his wretched way of life, and, if possible, he had become more penurious than ever; grudging even the smallest sum spent for himself.

It became very evident to all who saw him, and to himself, that he must soon close his existence here. He had said many times in his heart, "I have laid up much goods for many years;" but One mightier than he had also said, "Thou fool! this night thy soul shall be required of thee!" -

When Mr. Prescott arrived at his uncle's miserable dwelling, although accounts of his penurious habits had reached him, he was shocked and astonished at the sight presented, and begged the old

man to allow him to procure at least a suitable bed for him. But the thought of parting with any of his money threw him into such a state of excitement, that his nephew feared the feeble spark of life would wholly expire, if he insisted any further.

CHAPTER II.

THE MISER'S HEIR.

As soon as Mr. Wilson had satisfied himself as to the identity of his nephew, he had his will regularly drawn out, signed and sealed, leaving all his wealth to Mr. Prescott; but the amount was carefully concealed until his death should make it known.

On the day succeeding Mr. Prescott's arrival, it became very evident that the old man could not live through the night; and his nephew determined to remain by his bedside. The miser seemed to be dreaming of gold; and he murmured in his sleep of many things which made Mr. Prescott shudder with horror. Just at midnight, he was startled at seeing the old man, who had seemed too weak to move, suddenly sit upright in bed, and with clasped

hands appear to be imploring mercy. "Do not curse me so terribly!—I will give you the house! Take it!—Take wealth!—I will give you gold beyond your wishes; only, I beseech you, take away that fearful curse—I cannot die with it ringing in my ears! Have mercy on a poor old sinner! You said I should not die in peace; but leave me, and I will bless you!"

He continued, for more than half an hour, imploring mercy from an imaginary being; and then, with a howl of utter despair, he fell back and died. Was not the old woman's curse fearfully fulfilled? The miser died as he had lived; without a friend to shed a tear over his grave, or a loving heart to sigh for him and wish him back:—

"The hot curse of talents misapplied

Blistered his conscience with its burning smart;

And his soul must lie with Dives, spoiled of all its pride!"

After the funeral, the will was opened and read; and the astonished nephew found himself the sole heir to more than half a million of dollars! an amount of money of which he had hardly ever heard before. But at first the fact scarcely brought with it a feeling of pleasure; for the fearful image of that dying old man, imploring mercy from those

he had wronged, was so deeply impressed on his mind, that he longed to leave such painful recollections, and return to his peaceful home and beloved family.

Upon returning to his little homestead, Mr. Prescott immediately made arrangements for removing to the city of Boston, the immense business of his deceased uncle requiring his immediate attention; and in the course of a few days, he and his family safely reached the city.

After procuring a suitable dwelling, and settling his family comfortably in their new abode, Mr. Prescott took charge of his uncle's business, with the intention of winding up the concern, and retiring to live quietly on his great wealth; but the many friends whom his sudden riches called around him, earnestly advised him to continue the business, and place his son Edward, now a young man, at the head of the house, if he himself felt too old to continue it.

Mr. Prescott at first strenuously objected; as his son had not the slightest knowledge of mercantile affairs, having always been associated with his father in the care of their small farm; but he was told that the clerks and book-keeper of Mr. Wilson would be fully competent to do the real work, and

that his son would only have to sign his name, and give his personal attendance to the business.

After some consideration, Mr. Prescott at length consented, though with many misgivings as to the result; for he had early noticed in his son an indecision of character, and a weakness of purpose, which rendered him liable to be overcome by temptation and difficulties.

Edward Prescott was very amiable, loving, and kind-hearted; but without any strength of character. His whole life had been passed within the precincts of his native village; and of a city life, and its varied temptations and trials, he knew nothing from experience. The details of luxury and crime, and the scenes of poverty and ruin, which sometimes reached his ear, seemed to him more like those of some distant land, than as passing within a short distance of him. He had received a tolerable country education, and his father had early made him a good reader, by providing him with such books as would be likely to give him information and also to interest him.

Edward was now nearly twenty-two years old, and unmarried; but had long been engaged and ardently attached to a young girl in his native village. Lucy Lee was poor in worldly wealth, but

rich beyond description in the wealth of a sweet, loving disposition, and gentle, feeling heart, combined with great energy and determination; and richer still was she in an unfailing trust in the Creator of all; endeavoring daily, by her life and conversation, to honour Him who had placed her here for usefulness. Here were 'true riches,' for which the miser's gold could offer no equivalent, and which enabled her to toil uncomplainingly, to support herself and the last relative left her on earth, an aged and helpless grandfather.

It was in order that this dear relative should know no division in her affectionate feelings, that she had so long resisted Edward's entreaties to unite her fate with his, and share the humble home his daily labour would provide.

"Dear Lucy," Edward would say, "why not allow me to work for your grandfather, too? Surely I can love him as well as you."

"You think so now," Lucy would reply; "but you would not be so well satisfied after a while. You know you have to toil hard now for your own support; and two more would burden you too severely. No, Edward; we will wait patiently until my dear grandfather needs my help no more. He will soon fall, like the aged tree, and we will

remain as we are until the time shall come when he will no longer need my care."

Edward had submitted very reluctantly to what he felt was right. But, a short time previous to his father's unexpected change of fortune, the aged man had passed away; and Lucy was now free to fulfil her promise. She was busily engaged in her simple preparations, when Mr. Wilson's death made such an astonishing change in her lover's fortunes. She was now to prepare for a city life, to which she had been wholly unaccustomed.

An early day was appointed for their marriage, and Mr. Prescott forbore pressing too closely on his son the burden of his business affairs, until his union with Lucy should leave his mind more free and composed. A small but handsome house was beautifully fitted up for the young couple; and the kind and loving mother of Edward, with his amiable sisters, spared no trouble in arranging everything which they thought might give pleasure to the gentle and well-beloved Lucy; who, though simple in her tastes, cherished an intense love for the beautiful in any form; and her kind friends sought to please her, by bringing to her new home such luxuries as they knew she loved, but which her limited means had prevented her from enjoying.

A beautiful conservatory, filled with the choicest plants, opened into her light and cheerful parlour, which boasted no finery or expensive furniture, but neatness and good taste reigned throughout; and the light came softened through simple muslin curtains, which shaded all the windows, instead of the heavy damask with which the fashionable upholsterer would fain have furnished them.

Lucy had a love for white; and her own simple dress was usually of that color, when the season and weather would permit her to wear it. When does any young maiden look so lovely as in plain white muslin? no matter whether she is brunette or blonde, it is always becoming. Some say

“Dust will soil, and thorns will tear;
Is it fit for this world’s wear?”

We think so, and would always choose it for the young. It is the first dress put on the feeble infant—emblem of its perfect purity; and the last covering for the body from which the prisoned soul has just escaped to join the white-robed dwellers in the world of light! For Lucy it was a very suitable dress; for never was a purer spirit enshrined in a more lovely form. She was far superior in person as well as intellect to her intended husband;

but still she loved him with an intensity of affection. Sometimes his indecision of character, and the readiness with which he was impressed with the opinions of those around him, caused her much anxiety; but the shadow soon passed away, and his ardent, manly affection for her, dispelled all doubts from her mind.

The wedding was to take place early in June, that month of flowers, which Lucy loved so well. The young couple, by Lucy's own desire, were to be married in the village church, and after the wedding to proceed on their bridal tour. They intended to visit some of the beautiful parts of our country, and enjoy the magnificent scenery and an examination of the great natural curiosities with which it abounds, of which they had often read, but had never expected to see.

They were united early in June, and the aged pastor joined together two loving beings, for weal or for woe, to encounter the 'battle of life' together. But lately, the same solemn voice had consigned Lucy's last and dearly-beloved relative to the silent tomb, and sounded in her ear the words, "Earth to earth, dust to dust." She had listened then with a chastened sorrow, and with new and holy thoughts, arising from recollections of his

well-spent life, who now slumbered so peacefully beneath the green sod. The same deep voice now sent her forth no longer alone, but with a manly arm on which to lean, to encounter a life of temptation and perhaps sorrow. But no cloud darkened the prospect then.

After leaving the church and bidding adieu to their friends, Edward Prescott and his bride started for Niagara, where they passed a few weeks, reading new lessons from its imposing grandeur. They afterwards travelled for some time amid the wild western scenery, and other parts of our country, and after an absence of about three months gladly returned to their home.

Lucy was delighted with all that had been done for her comfort, and only wished that Edward's parents and sisters were under the same roof with her; but the good sense of her mother-in-law told her that it was best to leave them to themselves.

Edward's two sisters, Mary and Anna, were very much attached to Lucy, whom they had known from childhood. They were much older than she was, and many years the elders of their brother. They were past the time of life when women generally marry; and although their father's wealth brought many a suitor, they had determined on a

single life, and politely but firmly rejected all persuasions to the contrary.

Mary and Anna had never seen the old miser from whom their father had received his wealth; but when the accounts of his parsimony, although much softened before reaching their ears, were related to them, they would shrink with disgust from the details, and often say one to another, "Can a blessing go with wealth gained in this way?"

It seemed as if they were to be redeeming almoners of that ill-gotten wealth, for they early began to appropriate a part of their father's ample allowance to deeds of charity; and, winter and summer, in heat and cold, these kind and benevolent women might be seen administering comfort to the weary and heart-broken, and sending many a mourning spirit on its way rejoicing. One means of bestowing charity, which the sisters early adopted, was to pay liberally for all work performed for them; not striving to get things done *cheap*, but encouraging, by their liberal compensation, the honest spirit of independence which makes a *laborer* of many a delicate and gently-nurtured female.

Lucy usually accompanied them on their errands of charity, when she could be spared from her duties at home; and she laughingly used to say,

that her sisters consigned to her all the 'babies' that they found were in want of attention ; for they well knew her love for children, and that there was no surer way to call forth the best feelings of her heart, than by showing her a little child either sick or in want ; and in this way it happened that many a little voice was taught to lisp its daily prayer, by the gentle and good Mrs. Prescott.

The old man's wealth was becoming, in their hands, the cause of their finding 'true riches.' It had never blest him ; but it seemed now that it was to be a benefit to others. Was there no warning internal voice which whispered to the young and happy Lucy that it might not be always so ?

Edward Prescott had been placed by his father, with many misgivings, at the head of the extensive commercial house of his deceased uncle. The father had not himself any knowledge of mercantile transactions ; but he had a clear head, much reflection, and a stern, unbending integrity. He sought to acquire, even at his advanced age, some knowledge of business, in order to aid his son by his advice ; and it was always well bestowed as long as Edward consulted his father in his affairs.

For several years everything prospered with the wealthy and happy family. The first shadow which

fell across their path was the death of Edward's mother. She had been ailing for many years, and all that wealth could procure failed to restore her to health. She passed away, blessing her children to the last. Hers had been an innocent and useful life; and she had looked forward to its close here, with a chastened and holy joy. She had never

——— "pictured Death, a fearful tyrant;
But as an angel, beautiful as light,
Who watches o'er the sorrowing spirit here;
And when its weary pilgrimage is done,
Unbars the gates of everlasting life,
And vanishes forever!"

She had sought from the Book of Life to find the fountain of 'true riches;' and the blessings and heartfelt regrets of her children, as of many a one who 'had been ready to perish,' followed her to her final resting-place here.

To Lucy, the loss of her affectionate mother-in-law was very great. Her experience, guilelessness, and firmness, had supported her through many a trying scene; and particularly was her value felt in aiding her to bear calmly the little sicknesses and ailments of her infant children; which, when unsupported and alone, bring such trouble to the heart of the young mother.

CHAPTER III.

THE PRESCOTT FAMILY.

THE death of Mrs. Prescott was a severe blow to her husband. For more than forty years she had been his stay and support. In every sorrow, and they had had many, her gentle influence had enabled him to sustain himself with fortitude; and in their poverty, her untiring industry, patience, and economy, had materially lightened his otherwise heavy burden. And in their sudden and unexpected accession to wealth, how much did he owe to her sterling good sense and love of usefulness, to aid him to bear prosperity which his wildest dreams had never conceived!

Mrs. Prescott had felt all a mother's anxiety for Edward, when placed at the head of so large an establishment as the late Mr. Wilson's; and the

weakness and indecision of his character, which sometimes alarmed even the loving Lucy, were better known to her than any one else. She had opposed, so far as she thought right, the intention of placing Edward in so responsible a situation; but her objections had been overruled by those whom, in her humility, she considered better judges of the case than herself.

"Surely we have more than enough for even our most extravagant wishes," she would say; "why desire to increase our already large possessions? All our wealth will be our children's at our death, and there is sufficient to supply every reasonable want."

But her husband's argument in opposition to this was, "Edward must have employment. He has always had occupation for every moment, and time would hang heavily, and I fear unprofitably, on his hands, if he did not engage in some business."

So far, Mr. Prescott was right; but had he counselled Edward to remain in the country entirely, he would not have been surrounded by such powerful temptations. Mrs. Prescott acquiesced in his decision reluctantly, at first; but as there had not been anything yet to warrant her early

fears, she became reconciled to her son's new mode of life, and rejoiced over every fresh instance of his success. Well for her that the grave closed from her view the fulfilment of her forebodings, and that she did not live to see the overthrow of her best wishes in regard to this dearly-loved son!

Mr. Prescott's health gradually failed under the pressure of his loss. Life became wearisome to him, comparatively, without her who had made his life so contented and happy. He missed her daily care, her undeviating good temper, the warm welcome which always greeted him, and the numberless little attentions to his comfort, which make home so sweet.

His daughters were unwearied in their efforts for his welfare, and he fully appreciated their kindness and devotion; but much as he loved them, they were not to him what she had been. He 'sank by slow degrees away.' There did not seem to be much bodily suffering; but his mind had gradually become weaker and weaker, and his last hours were spent in imaginary conversation with her who had preceded him to the world of spirits; and affecting it was to hear the aged man converse, as in days gone by, with her who had been so long to him the main-stay of his existence.

His wealth seemed to have passed entirely from the dying man's recollection. He imagined himself still beneath the old elm-tree where he had wooed and won his gentle bride; when they began life with scarcely a spare dollar, but rich in love and simple, confiding trust in the great Father of all; sure that He who suffers not a sparrow to fall unnoticed to the ground, would bless their endeavors to lead a good and useful life.

The old man died. His children mourned for him sincerely. The death of her father-in-law was to Lucy a sore trial; for after Mrs. Prescott's decease, his gradually-declining health had made him an object of great anxiety to all his family, and particularly to the loving Lucy, who seemed again to be watching the last hours of her dear grandfather.

This was the second shadow which passed over the brilliant fortune of Lucy Prescott. It was dark and gloomy at first, but gradually passed away, leaving, for a time, a bright and glorious sunshine. Her two children were daily growing in loveliness; and her daughter Ellen combined great beauty with a very strong mind. She was now about twelve years old. Charming, indeed, was the fair-haired, blue-eyed little girl, whose

every movement was grace, and whose voice was music! She had all the best points of her mother's character, with the firm energy of her grandfather, and the gentle, loving heart of her grandmother. She was idolized by them all; and yet neither flattery nor indulgence marred the beauty of her character. You could readily fancy her intended for a high destiny in life. The luxuries and elegancies of her father's dwelling, which had so greatly increased since her grandfather's death, seemed to be hers of right; and your imagination could scarcely place the fair and delicate child in any other station than the one she now occupied.

To her maiden aunts, now very infirm, but still useful women, Ellen was the 'bright, particular star.' She passed several hours daily, with the two old ladies, listening with meekness and attention to their sensible advice. Lovingly and gently they counselled her how to use aright the wealth which would one day be hers.

"You must count yourself but the steward of the Lord's bounty," they would say; "and it is your duty to endeavor to spend aright what we fear has been amassed by so many acts of extortion and oppression. Let your wealth go abroad, healing sorrow and affliction wherever it may be found.

Haply some may be cheered who have been wronged by the old man from whom your wealth originally came. Let the miser's gold, if possible, find a blessing. It was gained at the expense of suffering, no doubt, and we have often felt as if it must yet bring sorrow."

Ellen always listened with the greatest respect and attention to her kind aunts; and no time passed more pleasantly to her than with those two cheerful and affectionate relatives.

Ellen's brother, William, was two years younger than herself. He was a serious, delicate boy, and passed most of his time in reading and in quiet amusements. For the boisterous and roving sports of robust boys he did not seem to have any taste. He was gentle and yielding, — more like his father than Ellen; his health, moreover, had never been strong.

Well-beloved were they both, those lovely children; and in one thing they were peculiarly united, — both cherished and possessed a talent for music very unusual at their early age. Already Ellen performed with great skill on the piano and guitar; and William, young as he was, had conquered many of the difficulties which occur to most children.

Both Edward and his wife were fond of music;

though neither possessed any knowledge of it beyond that acquired at a village singing-school. As they had early determined that their children's great talent for music should be well cultivated, the best masters had been procured to instruct them; and the rapidity with which they advanced in their studies was a pleasure to both teachers and scholars.

One beautiful summer afternoon, the whole family were assembled, just before sunset, in the piazza of Mr. Prescott's country residence, a few miles from Boston. Ellen, as usual, sat between her two aunts. She had been singing with William several beautiful songs; and gradually a feeling somewhat approaching to melancholy spread over the whole party. They were waiting tea for Mr. Prescott, who had not yet arrived from town. To divert the seriousness which came over them, it was proposed to walk and meet him as he came up the road.

Ellen gave an arm to each of her aunts, and William walked with his mother. No time was spent more pleasantly by the affectionate boy than that passed with his mother; and he always chose her society in preference to that of any other person — his darling sister not being excepted.

On this particular evening they wandered slowly along, out of hearing of the rest of the party. A thoughtful expression was visible on each of their countenances, and some moments passed in silence. At last, William said,—

“Dear mother, will you forgive me, if I ask you a question which perhaps you may think wrong, ~~but~~ which is dictated by no improper curiosity. Answer it or not, as you think best.”

“What is it, my son?” enquired Mrs. Prescott, observing that he paused as if unwilling to proceed further. “I know not any secret that should be between us.”

“Dear mother,” continued William, “I fear that something, I know not what, is troubling father a great deal; and the question I would ask is, whether you have observed any change in him lately?”

“Now that you mention it,” returned his mother, “I recollect that he has appeared quite serious for some time past; but he has always answered my enquiries by saying that he had a headache; and I have had no suspicion of any other cause for his unusual seriousness.”

“Perhaps it is so,” said William; “but yet” — and here he hesitated: — “No; I will not repeat

what I heard — it is, after all, but idle gossip, and not worthy of a thought.”

“You have greatly excited my curiosity, my son,” said Mrs. Prescott; “and if it is nothing disrespectful to your dear father, I should like you to repeat it. Perhaps it might aid me in my desire to ascertain the cause of his unusual seriousness.”

“Well,” returned William, “I will tell you, mother; and if my words should sound disrespectful, remember that they are not mine, but another’s.”

William then proceeded to tell his mother that on the preceding day he had gone to the city with his father, and after walking some distance in the hot sun, became fatigued and warm, and proceeded to his father’s counting-house, to enjoy the cool breeze from the bay, and rest himself previous to returning home. As he passed through the warehouse, the clerks and book-keeper were all busily engaged, and did not notice his entrance. His father was not there, as he had expected, and being very tired, he lay down on the sofa and fell asleep. The sofa stood in such a position that those in the warehouse could not see it without entering the apartment. William had slept some time, when

the sound of voices near at hand awoke him, and the first words he heard immediately arrested his attention. It was the grey-headed book-keeper who was speaking, and who thus addressed the chief clerk:—

“It is very sad that he neglects his business so entirely; I believe he has scarcely been in the store this week, and there are numerous important affairs which require his immediate attention. His business is already beginning to suffer, and his credit is somewhat shaken.”

“What is to be done?” replied the other; “If the old gentleman were living, we might hint to him our suspicions.”

“I wonder,” said the book-keeper, “if Mrs. Prescott has noticed that her husband is becoming intemperate?”

After proceeding thus far in his recital, William paused; for his mother became deadly pale, and he feared she would faint. He placed her upon a seat near by, and ran to procure some water with which to revive her.

When Mrs. Prescott had partially recovered, she kissed William, whose eyes were streaming with tears, and said: “We will not talk further on this matter at present. Perhaps you may not have

heard aright; and at all events, we should not judge any one on such slight grounds." This she said, hoping that William might have misunderstood or heard imperfectly what he had repeated; but a single glance at his sorrowful face assured her that he was not influenced by her argument.

Just then, Ellen's joyful voice reached their ears, calling aloud, "Papa's coming! papa's coming!" and they both arose to meet him. Mrs. Prescott was still pale and trembling, but hoped to escape notice; Ellen, however, as soon as she saw her mother, anxiously enquired,—

"What is the matter, mamma; are you not well?"

"Not very, Ellen," was the reply; "and I will return to the house with your aunts, who, I am sure, must be much fatigued, while you and William walk to meet your father."

They accordingly separated; and Mrs. Prescott, giving an arm to each of her sisters, who were very infirm, the three proceeded to the house, and placed themselves at the tea-table, to wait for Mr. Prescott and the children.

Voices were soon heard approaching the house, and Mrs. Prescott listened almost painfully for the first tones of the voice which had for years sounded

so pleasantly to her. It struck her ear now with a very different sensation, and made her shudder involuntarily; for the first words she heard were uttered in the thick and broken manner peculiar to the intemperate! Ellen was joyfully giving an account of the delightful ride she had taken, accompanied by her brother, on her own dear little pony.

“Do you know, papa, that he canters so fast that I can actually beat William’s horse! We quite ran races this morning, greatly to the scandal of some of our neighbors.”

Mrs. Prescott listened anxiously for her husband’s reply; for she knew that he had always been very careful of William, whose lungs were delicate, and had forbidden him to ride fast. But no sound reached her, except a sort of indistinct murmur.

By this time they had reached the parlor, and Mrs. Prescott’s first glance at her husband confirmed the many fears which had been locked up in her own bosom for some months, but which William’s communication had roused into fearful certainty.

Mr. Prescott’s face was flushed, and his gait trembling and uncertain, and he took his accus-

tomed seat at the tea-table with scarcely a word of greeting. His sisters were too old, and their sight too much impaired, to notice his condition; and William studiously averted his gaze from his mother's face, and the lively Ellen had to talk for the whole.

CHAPTER IV.

THE VOYAGE TO EUROPE.

FOR a short period after the scene just described, Mrs. Prescott's attention was drawn from her husband to attend more particularly to her aged sisters, who began to fail very rapidly, without any actual disease. They were closing, peacefully and tranquilly, their well-spent years; and their lamp of life was gradually going out here, to be rekindled in that home to which they had always looked with the humble hope that theirs might be the welcome of, — "Well done, good and faithful servants!"

The wealth of Edward's father had been equally divided between his three children; and consequently the sisters had a large fortune at their own disposal. Their wills had been drawn out long before; and Ellen was to receive the portion of one

aunt, and William that of the other;—each to be the other's heir in case of one dying without any children. The property was settled upon them in such a manner as to be entirely subject to their control when they should reach the proper age.

On a beautiful day in August, it became apparent that neither of the sisters would remain many hours longer in this world. Ellen attended each alternately, weeping bitterly; for it might be called her first sorrow; and all know how heavily it falls on the young and buoyant spirit.

“Ellen, dear,” said the feeble voice of her aunt Anna; “do not weep so. It is the greatest privilege to die as we do. Our lives here have become almost useless, and why wish to retain these worn-out bodies here, when you know that in the world of spirits we shall renew again our strength? We have done with earth forever; but if the spirits of the departed are permitted to watch over those they loved on earth, be sure that we shall be often near you; and once more, dear Ellen,—when the wealth which will one day be yours, is at your disposal, remember to use it aright; cleanse it, if possible, from the curse which I fear it will yet bring.”

The morning sun shone on the withered and worn-out frames which had once contained two as

bright and loving souls as ever visited this earth ! At their own request, their remains were removed to the village where they were born, and deposited in the churchyard where their young feet had often trod.

Ellen's grief was at first overpowering. She 'refused to be comforted;' and at last her mother, fearing for her health, gently reproved her excessive sorrow, and by giving her employment different from her usual course, in some degree kept her mind from dwelling on her loss.

Ellen was at this time about seventeen years of age. She had not yet entered general society, and was looking forward with great pleasure, previous to her aunts' death, to the ensuing winter, when her father had promised her the most brilliant ball that could be desired. But now she cared nothing about it, and was very glad that the respect due to her aunts' memory would prevent it from taking place.

The first thing which effectually roused her from her sorrow, was the gently-intimated fear of her mother for William's health; and when her attention was directed to that point, Ellen was shocked to perceive how much a short time had altered him. He no longer wished to join in her plaintive songs,

but would listen with intense delight to her rich, full voice. The short, quick cough would interrupt him when conversing, and daily he became weaker and more languid.

Mr. Prescott was deeply distressed at the situation of his darling boy; and every means which his great wealth could command was brought to aid his recovery; and for a time the demon which was destroying his own life and health, seemed banished.

A sea voyage having been recommended, the whole family prepared to go to Europe; hoping that the balmy air of the south of France, or the sweet climate of Italy, might bring back health to the sinking boy.

But William had no such hope. From childhood he had always felt a presentiment that his life here would be short; and in his many conversations with his mother, had fully impressed her with his views, and in some degree prepared her for the day which she felt must soon come. But she communicated to no one her feelings or thoughts. Everything that the most assiduous care could devise for her son's comfort, was done with the same unselfish energy which had always characterized her; and no one could have read, in Mrs. Prescott's calm deportment, the sorrow and anguish which were buried

in her bosom. Her grief for the young and innocent boy, whose soul was soon to flee to its eternal home, was lost sight of in bitter regret that the husband of her youth was sinking down into degradation and misery. For though the situation of his son had in some degree arrested his downward course, she knew that, the barrier once removed, he would sink still faster than before.

Of the effect which this bad habit had had on her husband's business, Mrs. Prescott knew but little; yet she could not doubt that it was very bad. Distant rumors of heavy losses came to her ear; and sometimes an impatient exclamation would escape from the infatuated man, which made her fear that all was not well with him.

When their preparations were completed, Mr. Prescott and his family embarked for Havre; and being favored with delightful weather, the drooping invalid appeared much revived, and they all began again to hope that William might yet be restored to health.

After arriving at Havre, they proceeded by easy journeys to the south of France, only remaining long enough in the capital to see some of its most prominent features; and arrived, before the beginning of winter, in a lovely village, where they in-

tended to remain for some time. At first, William was greatly benefited, and became strong enough to take exercise on horseback; and Ellen and he enjoyed some delightful excursions through the beautiful country around.

The party remained in this neighborhood for some time. William seemed to be gradually recovering; though the kind and attentive physician who accompanied them never spoke very encouragingly to his parents, of any permanent restoration. They afterwards proceeded to Italy—that beautiful land, of which Ellen had so often dreamed in past years.

William enjoyed their journey very much, as his parents adapted it entirely to his state of health; going each day just so far as his strength permitted, and often stopping for some time at different places, to admire the lovely scenery, and enjoy the balmy breezes.

During all this long journey, Mr. Prescott's conduct occasioned his wife and William great uneasiness. Sometimes he was extravagantly gay, at others so gloomy that he would scarcely speak a word for days together; and letters from home never failed to plunge him into a state of restlessness and irritation which seemed almost to deprive

him of his senses. Often would poor William press his mother's hand in silent sympathy, as the tears would fill her eyes — tears which she made great efforts to conceal from Ellen, who as yet had not the slightest suspicion of anything wrong, though she would sometimes look surprised at the short, angry answers of her father; but, naturally unsuspecting, she would attribute all to fatigue, and to anxiety respecting William; and by numberless little attentions endeavored to cheer him.

CHAPTER V.

SORROWS.

ONE day a large packet was received, containing letters from home. Each seized with avidity those directed to them. Ellen read with delight those which were sent by dearly-loved young friends in her native land; and Mrs. Prescott was also much interested in messages from old friends; but Mr. Prescott held his in his hand, as if unwilling to open them. At last, finding that his hesitation was attracting attention, he proceeded to break the seals. As he was reading them, his family, who had withdrawn, from motives of delicacy, from the table where he was sitting, were startled by a deep groan from Mr. Prescott. They flew to him in time to prevent him from falling on the floor, in a state of insensibility!

They were greatly alarmed; and when the usual restoratives had roused him, his family were still more surprised to hear the incoherent language which Mr. Prescott uttered. He exclaimed repeatedly, "A ruined man — the curse has followed me!" Then clasping his hands, he would implore his wife and children to pardon him — "a wretched, undone man!"

"What is the matter, dear father?" enquired Ellen; "tell us, that we may share in your sorrow, and perhaps lighten it."

"Cannot you tell, poor child? you are beggars! yes, beggars! — every dollar that I could ever call my own is gone, and we are beggars!"

Again a fearful paroxysm seemed to shake his frame; and the physician who travelled with them found it necessary to administer a powerful opiate, in order to quiet him.

When at last the unfortunate man was tranquilized and removed to his sleeping apartment, and Mrs. Prescott had time to attend to her children, she was startled and distressed to perceive that William appeared to be suffering extremely. She took his hand in hers — it was burning with fever; and the quick breathing, and short cough, told that the scene had been a fearful trial to him.

"My dear boy," said Mrs. Prescott, "are you suffering pain? How negligent we have all been, to allow you to remain so long without repose. Will you lie down now? See, here is the sofa, and Ellen will sing to you, and I will fan you to sleep. Will you not rest, my dear boy?" and his mother gently raised his head, which was reclining on her breast.

William seemed to be making an effort to speak, but ineffectually; and his mother had but time to place him gently on the sofa, when the crimson stream gushed from his lips, and he fell back nearly lifeless.

Their distress may be better imagined than described. William's health had seemed so much improved of late, that all fears of immediate danger had passed away, and they had begun insensibly to plan for him a life at least prolonged for years.

William's situation now, in addition to the fearful state of his father, called forth from Mrs. Prescott and Ellen new energies, to bear and combat with these aggravated trials; and Ellen's affectionate, unselfish character already began to show itself. Young as she was, and wholly unused to any kind of care, still no childish lamentation broke from her lips; but, composed and firm, she stood by her

mother's side, assisting her to administer to William the necessary restoratives, which finally produced sleep for the sufferer, although attended with great exhaustion.

All night did the anxious mother and daughter watch by the invalids; turning with tearful eyes from the almost death-like sleep of William to the incoherent ravings of Mr. Prescott, whom the physician pronounced on the verge of brain fever.

These distressing events had occurred within a day's journey of Rome, whither they had determined to proceed, and remain a few weeks. Their accommodations at the inn, where they had stopped merely to enjoy the beautiful scenery and afford rest to William, were very scanty and uncomfortable.

The morning sun rose on a scene of great trial and suffering. It became very evident to the tender mother and sister, that the beautiful life of their dearly-loved son and brother was rapidly drawing to a close. The dying boy made many ineffectual efforts to speak; and after a restorative had partially relieved him, he drew his weeping mother and sister close to him, and having kissed them affectionately, said with great difficulty:—

“Dear mother, why weep that I am going to

my home — that suffering and sorrow will soon be ended for me here? I could not aid you in my present state of health; and I thank the Lord that he has pleased, in his goodness, to lighten your burden, by removing one source of grief and anxiety; and that your minds will be at peace as regards me, in the storm of suffering and trial which I plainly foresee lies before you. You are aware, dear mother, that I long ago told you that I feared my Father was wandering sadly from the true way; and as all concealment must soon be at an end, I will venture to advise what I think will be the best course for you all." Here his extreme exhaustion obliged the sufferer to pause; and when again able to speak, he directed his remarks to the weeping Ellen: "My darling sister, — can you, whose life has heretofore been like a summer sunshine, realize for a moment that winter's blasts are around you, rooting up your most cherished plans, and overthrowing all loved and dear associations? But, my dear sister, dark as is the prospect, I have no fears for you. Young as I am, I have already learned to study character well; and I foresee that the dark cloud which will soon overshadow you, will bring out, in beautiful contrast, the strength and brightness of your mind; making sunshine yet for

those you love, by a life, on your part, of usefulness, such as prosperity, uninterrupted, would never have developed. My breath is growing shorter, and warns me that I must hasten what I wish to say. Will you, my dear mother, leave us alone for a moment?"

Mrs. Prescott left the room, in compliance with her son's wish; well knowing what communication he was about to make to Ellen, and sorrowing as only those can sorrow, who know that the loved ones can no longer retain the high station which good conduct entitled them to hold. The great faults of her husband's character were daily making themselves more manifest; and she knew it was best for Ellen to be apprized, by William, of what she must soon know, as sorrow for his approaching departure would blunt the edge of any communication, apart from that.

And she was right. William's information of the downward course of their dearly-loved father struck, it is true, with great force on Ellen's unsuspecting mind; but the anxiety for fear her brother would overtask his strength, and life depart even while he was talking, made the intelligence less engrossing than it would otherwise have been.

William broke the news to his sister gently and

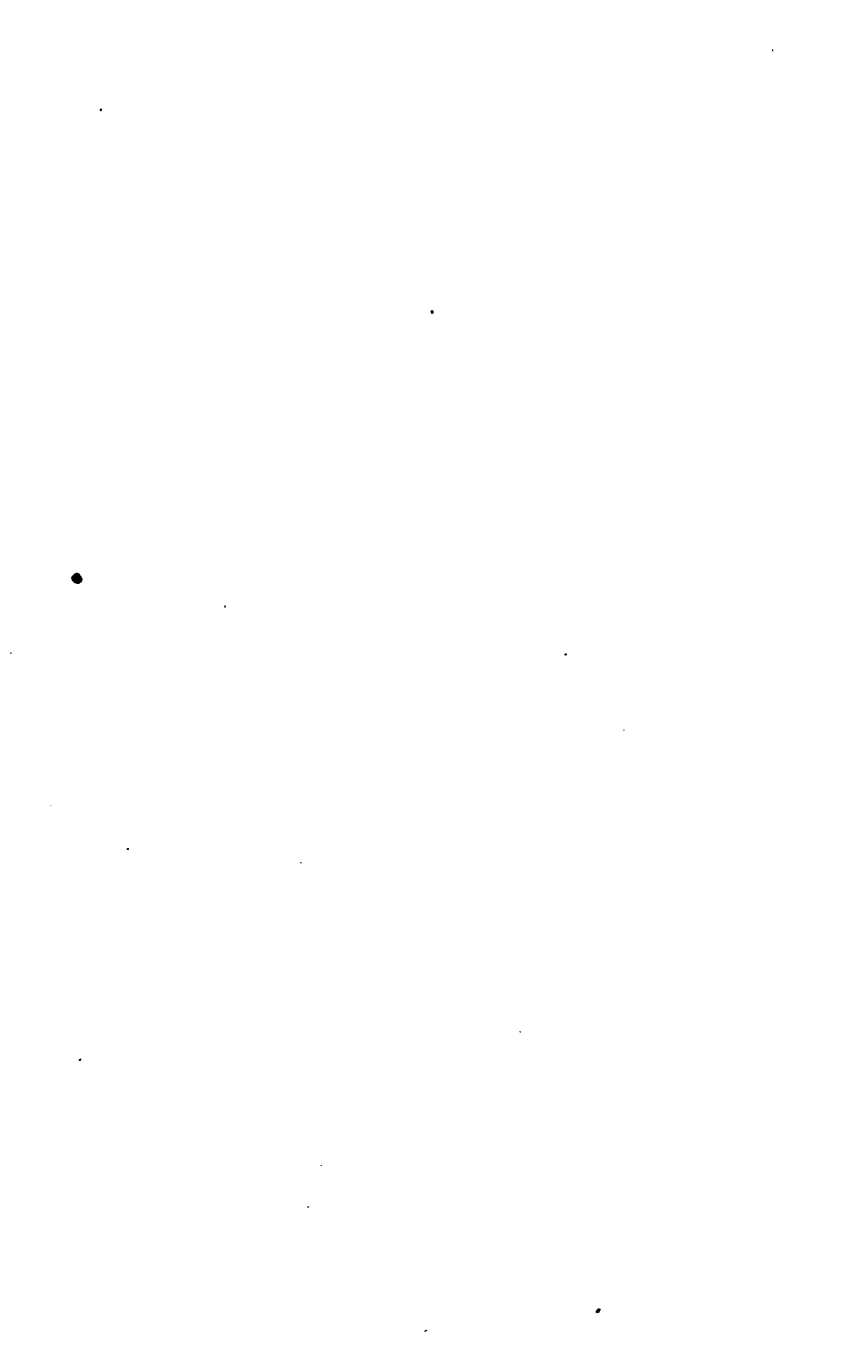
kindly: "I know, dear Ellen," said he, "that no faults of our dear father will ever cause you to vary for a moment in your feelings toward him, or lead you to relax in your duty. And I fear a time will come, when he will be dependent on your love entirely — perhaps for his subsistence; for I think his fortune is gone."

Ellen looked very much astonished at this information; for she had so long been accustomed to regard her father as a rich man, that she could not at first comprehend that it was possible to be otherwise; but her brother told her that, previous to their leaving home, the old book-keeper, who was much attached to him, had told him plainly, that bad speculations, stock-gambling, and, he feared, other species of gambling, had so far impaired his father's fortune, that a few more losses would plunge him into irredeemable ruin; and it was the news of these losses which had overcome Mr. Prescott, on receiving their last package of letters from home.

"And now, dear sister, promise me that when you come into possession of your fortune and mine, which will soon be yours, you will endeavor to repair, with that money, some of the wrongs which our father's conduct may have entailed on others.

It is no ordinary sacrifice which will be required, dear Ellen; for you have been reared in habits which will make privation, perhaps want, very severe to you; and I wish you to consider well before you make the promise, as it cannot be exacted from you without your free-will. I have always felt, like our dear aunts, that a blessing would hardly follow that old man's gold; and many a time has the thought of that aged woman's curse crossed my mind, in the lone hours of the night. Relieve, if possible, some of the suffering caused by his grasping avarice. It may be that your all will be required; but I have no fears, dear Ellen, but that it will be cheerfully given."

Ellen remained silent for some time; and her brother watched with anxiety the changes of her countenance. Standing, as he did, on the verge of eternal life, how trifling and unimportant seemed all of this world's goods to him, in comparison with the 'true riches,' which would enable Ellen, particularly, to find within herself treasures of untold value, in self-sacrifice, and a determination to repair, as far as possible, the wrongs which others had committed! And yet, light as they seemed in comparison, William saw at a glance that Ellen could not as yet feel as he did, who had so nearly





DEATH OF WILLIAM PRESCOTT.

done with time. Life yet spread out to her many a brilliant prospect; and he knew that the overthrow of many loved and cherished plans would follow, if she fulfilled his suggestion.

Anxiously did her brother watch for the good to triumph over the evil, in the struggle which he saw was taking place in Ellen's mind; and the tears flowed freely from his eyes, when he observed the small hands clasped in prayer, and the slight frame, quivering with emotion, bend humbly to implore strength from above. He knew then that her triumph was sure; she had gone to the only source from whence succour could come, in this her hour of trial; and he felt convinced that 'all was well' with her.

A pressure of the hand, and the ardent kiss which Ellen bestowed on the dying boy, told him that the promise was registered on high more plainly than words, and that his dying request would be fulfilled; and he made a sign to Ellen to recall his mother.

With a hand of each firmly clasped in his own, William gently went into a slumber, which being prolonged beyond the usual time, Mrs. Prescott rose from her seat at his bedside, and anxiously bent over him. The last struggle was over! In

that quiet sleep the beautiful spirit of William Prescott had passed to its future home !

No violent grief was manifested, no loud shrieks were heard, as the mother and daughter remained gazing on the sweet, calm face of the dead. Emotions very engrossing in their character, were filling the mind of each ; and it would have seemed sinful to the two, now doubly endeared to each other, to have wished for a moment to recall to the suffering which each felt was to come, the dear one, now slumbering so peacefully.

Mr. Prescott's state was still such, that he would not have understood, even if he had been told of his son's death. A heavy stupor had succeeded the violent paroxysms which he had experienced at first ; and he had not appeared conscious of any outward objects since then. His previous habits of intemperance added still greater danger to the fever which had attacked him ; and his physician watched anxiously, lest life itself should depart.

After waiting a few days, and finding that her husband's condition did not improve, Mrs. Prescott concluded to have William's body removed to its last resting-place, the English churchyard, which was not many miles from the inn where they were staying.

On a glorious day, when all was bright around them, and nature smiling in the luxuriance of summer, the small procession, which bore to its mother earth all that remained here of as pure and lovely a heart as ever beat within a frail body, wound slowly through the beautiful valley, on its way to the churchyard.

Calmly, but with a silent sorrow, stood Mrs. Prescott and Ellen beneath the noble tree which shadowed the simple grave of their dear son and brother. Sorrow for their loss might surely be forgiven them; as it was unmingled with a selfish thought or wish that it might have been otherwise. It was sorrow which chastens and subdues, while it enables the spirit to bear and suffer yet more firmly what may be still to come. Such sorrow

——— "the good man bears,
As the archangel wears his wings, to elevate and glorify!"

After the service was over, Mrs. Prescott and her daughter requested to be left alone for a while; and the rest of the small company having retired, both, with their hands clasped, knelt silently by the grave. Into their hearts at that time, none but He to whom their voiceless prayers ascended, could look. But they rose, after an hour of silent com-

muning with their Father in Heaven, strengthened ; — to go on their way, if not rejoicing, at least without murmuring.

And here we may again quote the words of Jean Paul: — “And let this one sorrow be forgiven them, or made good to them — the sorrow for their dead one ; for this sweet sorrow for the lost is itself but another form of consolation. When the heart is full of longing for them, it is but another mode of continuing to love them ; and we shed tears when we think of their departure, as well as when we picture to ourselves our joyful reunion — and the tears do not differ much.”

CHAPTER VI.

THE RETURN HOME.

ON the evening following William's burial, Mrs. Prescott and Ellen sat side by side in the apartment of the unconscious father. Their hearts were full, and each was struggling to support the other; and many a silent pressure of the hand told of sympathy and love. Both knew and fully realized that they were called upon to *act* — that they 'must be up and doing, while the day lasted;' and after a time passed silently, Mrs. Prescott said, in a low, but firm voice: —

"Ellen, my child, let us counsel together what is next to be done. Your father's last intelligible words are still ringing in my ears, and I feel that even in the hour of sorrow we must yet think of how we are to proceed, in order to save more

expense than we have already incurred within a short time."

"Let us return home, my dear mother," replied Ellen, "as quickly as possible. In that dear land of my childhood, I can think, and, I trust, act, better and more wisely than here. Let us go home, and then determine our plans for the future."

"But I fear your father's state forbids removal," returned Mrs. Prescott.

"I have asked our kind doctor," said Ellen; "and he says that he may journey safely after a few days. He intimated, also, that his health would not be materially better for some time — perhaps months."

A slight shudder shook the frame of Mrs. Prescott, as a glance at the vacant countenance of her husband told how many hopes and affections were buried there in that inanimate form. Visions of her youth, when the manly form of her lover, and his earnest pleadings for her to bind her fate to his; hours of sweet communion beneath the old trees of her native village, with no thought of wealth, but what their own labor could realize; and the trembling which had sometimes seized her, when she saw those traits of indecision and weakness which she dreaded — all flashed across her memory

at once. 'Would that the old man's gold had gone with him to his grave!' she was ready to exclaim; 'we should not then have had the burden of a curse to carry with us through life.'

In a few days, Mr. Prescott's bodily health began perceptibly to mend, and something like reason to return to his mind; and taking advantage of this favorable change, the whole family embarked from the nearest sea-port, for home, to which Ellen, in particular, looked forward with intense eagerness. A small branch from a rose-bush which grew near the grave of her deceased brother, was her most cherished treasure; and she never looked at it, but new resolutions sprang up in her mind, to fulfil to the utmost the dying charges he had given her. 'It shall be my talisman,' said Ellen. 'A glance at it shall strengthen me, when my resolution is likely to fail; and it shall always be my companion, serving me as a memorial of the dear one who is now sleeping in a foreign land.'

Ellen had communicated to her mother the last conversation held with her brother, and had received from her a tearful but earnest injunction to do as her own heart prompted. "A few short months, dear Ellen, will put you in possession of a noble fortune. You cannot be called upon to sacri-

five one dollar of it, unless you choose. Your aunts' will prevents any one from using it, except yourself; and its future disposal rests in your own hands."

"I could not enjoy it, dear mother, while a stain rests on my father's name. If gold poured out freely can wash it out, I will cheerfully give all — yes, all — to do it. You know, dear mother," continued Ellen, smiling sadly, "I used to laugh, and say that it was a pity my voice should be of no use; perhaps its notes may yet bring something of value to us all." A silent pressure of the hand told Ellen how deeply her loving mother felt the possibility of such an event.

A short and pleasant voyage soon brought the wanderers home; and Ellen could hardly realize, as she stood again beneath the roof of her father's costly mansion, that it was not a dream which had passed over her; and almost expected to see the delicate form of her brother, reclining on the sofa beneath the spreading curtain, as he used to do in former times.

The news of Mr. Prescott's heavy losses was not generally known, as many of those interested had waited for his return, trusting that matters might be better than was conjectured. His miserable

state prevented him from taking any active part in arranging his business affairs, as it was only at intervals that reason seemed to break through the heavy clouds which encompassed it; and then it was the moaning of a child over a lost plaything, rather than the manly sorrow of a misguided man.

Mr. Prescott would weep and lament over the prospect of leaving his beautiful house; and almost agonized his poor wife and daughter, by loud lamentations for his grand dinners and costly wines. "We shall starve — all starve, I know!" exclaimed the poor, weak man; "we cannot live unless we have all just as it is now, and I shall have to eat poor things instead of my nice dinners!" and then a violent fit of crying would render his utterance stupid and imbecile.

Poor Ellen! with her high and lofty aspirations after 'true riches,' such as money could not buy, how harshly his childish lamentations grated on her ear! She had nerved herself for great things; but this puerile sorrow almost broke her heart.

Their friends — and they possessed some sterling ones, who were uninfluenced by their golden days of prosperity, and who clung to them just as firmly now that adversity seemed coming upon them — advised Mrs. Prescott to put her husband's affairs

at once into the hands of an experienced man of business. It was possible, by judicious management, that something might yet be saved from the wreck; and if not, why it was better to know the worst.

Many a one said, 'How fortunate it was that his daughter's aunts bound up their property in such a manner that Mr. Prescott could not touch it! Ellen has now a very large fortune at her command, and can still live as she does now, if she chooses.' Little did they imagine that every dollar of it was already appropriated, in Ellen's mind, to the payment of her father's debts; and that she was merely waiting to ascertain the best way in which to accomplish her purpose!

Mrs. Prescott's first step was to leave their stately mansion; giving up all that it contained, including great quantities of plate, and costly furniture. Many things in the house, the creditors, who respected the gentle and lady-like wife and daughter, would willingly have pressed them to retain; but they firmly declined. The valuable jewelry, which Mr. Prescott's pride and affection had induced him to purchase for his wife and daughter, was also left behind in the house, to be sold for the benefit of the creditors. The family

removed to a small cottage, several miles from the city, which had formerly belonged to Ellen's aunts, and was still very comfortably and neatly furnished.

Mrs. Prescott and her daughter left their beautiful residence with scarcely a pang of regret; but the lamentations of Mr. Prescott over his hard fortune, as he termed it, were very distressing.

"To think of going in a common stage! — why, Ellen, I won't go in that way! — Where is Thomas and the carriage? I am sure you need not be so miserly — you have got money enough; then why do you make your poor, unfortunate father so miserable?"

These lamentations were constantly uttered by the poor man, and added new pangs to the heart of his already heavily burdened daughter. To be accused of avarice, when she valued her wealth only because it might save her father's name from disgrace, and repair the wrong which his imprudence had occasioned, was indeed a bitter cup to drink; but when most unnerved by his complainings, a look at the cherished rose-tree would again strengthen her to bear and endure.

CHAPTER VII.

MORE SORROWS.

A HEAVY misfortune, as some would term it, seemed about to overtake Ellen; and it was one from which she shrunk with bitter tears. A blindness seemed about to fall on her gentle and loving mother. For years she had dreaded it; and eminent medical skill had been employed at various times, in order to avert it, if possible. Mrs. Prescott's sight had been somewhat better during their absence; but now the disease seemed to increase rapidly, and the almost heart-broken Ellen was told that probably it would never be cured. Now, indeed, her cup of sorrow seemed full. To her mother she had invariably looked for support and comfort, in the trials through which she knew she must pass before anything like quiet could be again

restored to them; and to have to cheer and assist her mother, instead of receiving the support she herself needed, was indeed a great affliction; and but for the firm and fixed principle of right which had been early instilled into her mind by her mother and aunts, and which William's dying words had strengthened and encouraged, Ellen would have sunk under it.

In Mr. Stanton, an able lawyer, and esteemed friend of the family, Ellen found a very judicious adviser; and although he was surprised, and at first disapproved of her intention to devote her fortune to the payment of her father's debts, her arguments, and right views of what respect to his name demanded, finally silenced, if it did not convince him.

"I tell you again, my kind friend," said Ellen, that I cannot enjoy the wealth which you call mine. It came, originally, laden with the tears and groans of perhaps thousands of sufferers; and I feel that no blessing came with it. My dear aunts, and my darling brother, advised me to sanctify it, if possible, by spending it aright; and if but one heart is cheered by its use, why this part of the curse is removed. Nay, do not smile at my superstition, as I suppose you think it!"

"If I were so disposed, my young friend, I should certainly suppress all such feeling, and bear my willing testimony, that the source whence comes your present strength to perform so noble an action, must be on high;" and the speaker bowed his head almost reverently before the blushing Ellen.

"Do not praise me too much, Mr. Stanton," replied Ellen. "But for my dear aunts and brother, I fear I never should have had courage to undertake so great a task; but I feel that their blessing goes with it."

"And what is your plan?" enquired Mr. Stanton; "I should like fully to understand your views."

"First," replied Ellen, "to ascertain the amount of my father's debts; and if my own fortune will cover them, in addition to what may be realized from his houses and personal property, to give it all up to the creditors, reserving merely enough to make my father and mother comfortable during the remainder of their life. Six or seven hundred dollars a year will do that, with economy; and at their decease, that sum shall also go toward liquidating any further claims."

"And for yourself, my dear young lady?" en-

quired the wondering lawyer. "You have not named any sum for yourself."

Ellen's answer was to open the grand piano, which her loving aunts had provided for her use, in the house in which they lived, and where so much of her life was spent; she struck a few chords with a trembling hand at first, but which gradually became stronger, and then a gush of melody flowed from her lips, fairly startling the listener with its sweetness and power.

"There is my fortune!" said Ellen, almost gaily, though a tear was in her eye; for it was the first time she had sung since the death of her brother. "There is my gold-mine! What is the use of having a voice to sing, if one cannot use it? I intend to teach other birds to carol like myself!"

"My dear young lady, I fear you little realize what you are about to undertake. You cannot be aware of the heavy task of teaching."

"Indeed you are mistaken. I have thought much of it, and I think fully understand all the difficulties in my way; but with you to bear testimony to my abilities, I do not doubt that I shall succeed."

"Well, may God speed you," replied Mr. Stanton; "and I am sure he will; for your conduct

deserves the blessing it will surely find. And now farewell for a few days. When I see you again, it will probably be to deprive you of that golden charm which some would prize beyond that priceless spirit which aids you now in your seeking after 'true riches!'"

Great were the outcries, and even remonstrances, of Ellen's friends, when they became aware of her determination to appropriate her wealth towards paying her father's debts. "What nonsense!" cried one. "She must be mad! They are not her debts — what business has she to be paying them?" "And," said another, "she might still live in that beautiful house, and keep her carriage, just as her parents formerly did. To think of throwing away such a noble fortune, in order to pay other people's debts! — I have no patience with such folly!"

But all did not make such remarks as these; for young Mr. Stanton expressed his admiration in the most ardent terms. He had long loved the gentle Ellen, but unknown to her; for her youth, previous to her departure for Europe, had prevented him from ever paying her any particular attention. His feelings towards Ellen, however, were well known to his father, and he had his permission to win her for his wife, if he could; but now, when

she was about to give up her noble fortune, and seek a livelihood for herself, he somewhat feared that his father might change his opinion. But he soon found that his father looked with feelings of admiration on the noble resolution of Ellen; and Mr. Stanton, when questioned on the subject by his son, replied: "My dear boy, if my consent was cheerfully given when you asked it before, be sure that I will even aid you now to obtain such a treasure as any man will possess in that self-denying, excellent girl. I have ample means—honest, hard-earned wealth—enough for you both, and which will be yours at my decease; you need not the miser's gold to make your life, should you win her, a happy and prosperous one."

The young man had been educated for the ministry; and with something of the same unselfish energy exhibited by Ellen, he had not sought a pulpit in the city, but wished to carry out into the 'Far West' his talents and desire to benefit mankind; yet, being an only child, and his father advanced in years, he had remained at home, to give to his parent the attention which he knew he needed and would miss.

In the course of a few weeks, Ellen's large fortune passed into other hands, save the small sum

reserved for the support of her almost idiot father and ailing mother. They were established in their cottage home, which Ellen had also retained, and from which every article of luxury was banished, save Ellen's piano, which was to bring the means of support to the ardent and energetic girl.

The knowledge of Ellen's history soon brought many pupils to her residence, and she attended a number of others at their homes. Curiosity, no doubt, prompted some to patronise her, in order to see how the wealthy heiress would appear in her new station; and perhaps similar ill feelings may have prompted others; but the majority looked on her as a dearly-loved friend, and bestowed every attention on her which delicate interest could prompt.

CHAPTER VIII.

ENCOURAGEMENT.

ONE day, just as Ellen was preparing to leave home, a strange, rough-looking man entered the little garden before the cottage, and enquired, in a loud voice, for Mr. Prescott. Ellen, who was standing near the door, asked him his business, telling him that Mr. Prescott was ill.

"Ill? I'm sorry for it; for I wished to tell him something that perhaps might please him; and now I think of it, *you* must be the one I ought to thank."

"And for what, my good friend?" asked Ellen, mildly; "I do not remember ever seeing you before."

"I dare say not: but did you never hear of the curse which Mr. Wilson received from the old woman?"

"Yes," replied Ellen; "but why allude to what passed so long since? I do not like to think of it at all."

"I dare say not; for it was a heavy curse," said the man. "I heard it uttered, and in my childish heart joined in; for I was the little boy whose hand my grandmother held when she pronounced those dreadful words."

"Were you indeed?" enquired Ellen, fearing that the man sought to see her father, in order to add a new insult to his already heavy load. But he looked at her with almost tearful eyes, and told her that he had sought employment from Mr. Prescott, with the intention of injuring him in some way; and that his grandmother had charged him to pursue the family with the hatred which she carried to her grave.

For several years, the man had worked for Mr. Prescott, without ever alluding to his relationship to the old woman, but still cherishing an inward dislike to his employer. Gradually, however, his ill feeling had disappeared; and a short time previous to Mr. Prescott's departure for Europe, he had permitted quite a large sum of money, for a poor man to have saved, to remain in his hands; so that when he received the news of his employer's

failure, the thought of his own loss nearly drove the man distracted.

"I was nearly mad, my dear young lady, and thought that my grandmother's curse was visited on me for trusting any one belonging to a man whom she so bitterly hated. I scarcely know what I should have done, for I was like a maniac; when one morning, a few weeks since, I was sent for to Mr. Stanton's office, and there received every cent due me; and," continued the hard-featured man, evidently struggling with deep emotion, "I was also told that to Mr. Prescott's daughter I owed it that I was not a ruined and undone man. And now take a poor man's blessing; and may it drive away the dreadful curse which still hangs around the old miser's gold!"

So saying, the man turned and left the garden as abruptly as he had entered; but Ellen returned into the house, to cheer her mother with the tale. Ellen's arduous duties that day were lightened, and she returned home that evening light-hearted and encouraged. She found that a physician, formerly well known to their family, had visited her mother during her absence, and pronounced her eyes curable, if she would submit to a painful operation, and some months of close confinement;

and suggested that it would be much better for her to become a resident of the Hospital, during that period.

"But how could I leave you, my dear Ellen, alone with your poor father? You know how wearisome are his complaints after his lost wealth, and how bitterly he reproaches you for depriving him of the use of your money. How could you bear this trial alone? and where should we find means to pay the great expense?" and poor Mrs. Prescott's countenance again became very sad, as the difficulties which presented themselves dissipated all the hopes which had at first inspired her.

"There's nothing to prevent, dear mother," replied Ellen. "You must go, and trust me for removing all obstacles. You know my wand turns all to gold!" continued she, gaily; "and I shall have ample means to pay all expenses; and as for poor father, never fear. I will so amuse and pet him, that he will forget past days and enjoy the present!"

Ellen spoke cheerfully and gaily; for the thought of her mother's restoration gladdened everything around her, and she felt as if all else was light in comparison.

On her next visit to the city, Ellen sought out

the physician who had visited her mother, and received from him so much encouragement that her sight could be entirely restored, that she begged the necessary arrangements might be made without delay. In a short time, Mrs. Prescott was removed to the city, and Ellen accompanied her; with tearful eyes, but a cheerful voice, encouraging the failing strength of her mother, by bright pictures, which she drew of scenes of future enjoyment, when she should have recovered her sight.

“You will not know me, dear mother. I am such a great, red-cheeked girl, that you will not believe it is your delicate, often-drooping Ellen. I am happier in the possession of health than all the gold of the Indies could make me. I have found riches of which the old miser, in his gold-seeking, never dreamed. I have found within myself such riches as I never should have discovered, had I continued to live in that hotbed of splendor and indulgence in which my early days were passed. Believe me, dear mother, I should not have found ‘true riches’ there; for I should have considered that it was impossible to work, or use those gifts which I possess.

Mrs. Prescott was cheered and encouraged by Ellen’s conversation; and though the thought of

parting was a very hard one, yet each was comforted by the consciousness of doing her duty, and the determination to support each other in this added trial.

When Ellen had seen her mother comfortably fixed with their kind friend, Dr. Howard, and had remained long enough to see that the tremor, which at first was agitating her, had begun to subside, she kissed her affectionately, and bidding her good-bye, said gently and cheerfully: "Do not have an anxious fear, dear mother, for my father. I will watch him very carefully and obediently, and strive to divert him as much as I can. You know I have two or three holidays this week."

Ellen spoke cheerfully to her mother; for she saw plainly that her naturally strong mind was sinking gradually under the pressure of this great affliction; for to deprive Mrs. Prescott of the power to *act*, was indeed the greatest of all suffering. She had borne unrepiningly the death of her dear boy, and the loss of their fortune; even the degraded state of her husband had never caused her to vary in her kind and gentle treatment towards him; but the prospect of passing many long years, perhaps, in a state of inactivity, was dreadful for her to contemplate. Dr. Howard

spoke encouragingly to his patient; and though he carefully avoided exciting hopes which might be disappointed, still he said enough to cheer them both.

The parting of mother and daughter was a very great trial; but as it was absolutely necessary, it was submitted to without repining, and Ellen left her mother, to return to a home cheerless, indeed, now that that dear parent was not there to advise and assist her to press onward in her duty; for Ellen had many trials to encounter in her new avocation; and numerous mortifications, of which, at a former period in her life, she had never supposed it likely that she would be the subject, often sent her home in tears. But never for a moment had Ellen regretted the use to which her property had been applied, or failed in one single duty toward her erring father, whose state was daily becoming more and more pitiable.

When Ellen reached home, she found her father sitting in the piazza; and after speaking to him pleasantly and affectionately, she explained the cause of her mother's absence. She had some difficulty in making him comprehend why it was necessary for her to leave home. He shed tears, as he always did now, when anything crossed him,

and complained bitterly that he was always the sufferer.

“But for you, Ellen, I might have still had my nice house and plenty of attendants, and your mother need not have had to go away like a pauper. You gave away your money to strangers, and let your parents want; and that you call doing your duty!”

Ellen bore his reproaches in silence; the whole ground had been so often gone over before, without making her father conscious that it was *his* fault, not hers, which had occasioned the change in their manner of living, that she seldom replied now to his remarks.

The poor man, aged in appearance, from excesses, not from years, wept and lamented for some time over his hard fate; and when he seemed to become more calm, Ellen led him into the house, and persuaded him to rest on a sofa; then opening her piano, though wearied with her day's work, she poured out for him such beautiful melody, that his restless and complaining spirit was gradually soothed, and Ellen soon had the satisfaction of finding him much more quiet and contented, and even disposed to speak somewhat kindly to her. Cheered by this good beginning, his affectionate

daughter related to him every little event which she could recollect, that would be likely to amuse and interest him; and he finally retired for the night, without resorting to his usual tumbler of brandy and water.

CHAPTER IX.

NEW TRIALS FOR ELLEN.

BEFORE her mother left home, Ellen had received a very feeling and manly letter from young Mr. Stanton, telling her of his hopes, and begging her to give a favorable answer. Ellen had always esteemed him greatly; and, perhaps, under other circumstances, would have willingly accepted his suit; but the promise, silently made at the bedside of her dying brother, never to forsake her father during his life, forbade her encouraging any attentions, and she firmly but gently requested Mr. Stanton never to mention the subject again.

“I shall never marry while my father lives. I have bound myself by a promise, never to leave him, or suffer him to want for any personal attentions, while he remains here; and highly as I

esteem myself honored by your sentiments, so kindly expressed, and by your respected father's approval, I must again repeat, that all solicitations to induce me to change my mind will be in vain."

When Ellen's answer reached Mr. Stanton, his disappointment was at first severe, yet he respected and even loved her more for her decision; but feeling it to be impossible for him to meet her without painful feelings, he begged his father's permission to travel for a while, to which he consented; and after an interview with Ellen, who told him frankly, that under other circumstances she might have decided differently, and promised to retain for him a place in her memory, as among her best friends, the young man bade her and his father adieu, and departed for a tour in Europe; resolved to use all his energies to make himself a better teacher and minister of God's word, by bringing to his work a mind chastened and subdued by this, his first severe trial.

Mr. Stanton had Ellen's permission to write to her; and his letters always interested her extremely, especially when he wrote from such places as she had visited; and tears of fond recollection stole down her cheeks, when a large package reached her, containing a minute account of his visit to her

brother's grave, and kind messages from many who remembered the sweet American girl, who so tenderly loved, and assiduously watched over her invalid brother. A few leaves, carefully dried and pressed, from the rose-bush which grew near her brother's resting-place, were also enclosed.

Mr. Stanton often alluded delicately but feelingly to the cause of his leaving his country, and expressed his appreciation of her motives in declining his suit, in such terms as made Ellen gratefully feel that at least she had gained a warm friend, and one who would always be willing to aid her in pursuing the right way.

Ellen's trials heretofore, though very severe for so young a person, had been of the kind which admits most readily of consolation to those who look for it from the proper source. In the death of her dear grandparents and aunts, the knowledge that they had passed the period when a continued stay here is not desirable, reconciled her, after the first bitter pain of parting was over; and after her brother's death she had also been consoled by the conviction that a prolonged life would have been one of physical suffering, from which she unselfishly rejoiced that he was delivered. But her mother's blindness was an event which had never

occurred to Ellen as possible; for Mrs. Prescott had carefully concealed from her family the apprehensions which had filled her own mind; and though she was cheered somewhat by Dr. Howard's hopes of a permanent cure, yet sadly and bitterly the poor girl wept when she was first left alone to watch over the other parent, whose 'living death' was a far greater trial than committing to their mother earth the bodies alone of those she had so loved.

Mr. Prescott's state was indeed a pitiable one. Never strong in character, or able successfully to combat with temptation, the sudden change from his quiet life in the country to the thousand snares and enticements of the city, had completely unsettled his mind; and he had gradually wandered away from the straight path of right, and groped in thick darkness, without the bright light of religious faith and trust to guide him through the bewildering vices which beset him on his sudden accession to wealth. Designing men had early singled him out for a prey; and through them he had entered into the most rash and daring speculations; contrary to the advice, and indeed sometimes without the knowledge of the worthy and intelligent men who had really conducted the prosperous busi-

ness of Mr. Wilson ; for he, selfish and grasping as he was, had seen enough to know that he must have able men to take charge of his affairs. But Mr. Prescott chose to trust to the representations of men who flattered his self-love by an assumed deference for his opinions, and who aided their schemes by bringing him constantly into scenes fraught with temptation, which they well knew would gradually overthrow what little firmness he possessed.

At first, Mr. Prescott's evenings only were passed in the luxurious rooms which were fitted up by the men whose deep-laid plans were at last successful in ruining his business ; and different games of cards were always in readiness whenever he chose to join ; but it was to the demon of strong drink that they finally owed their success. At first, it was but the glass of wine, which was proffered to their welcome guest, the rich merchant, Mr. Prescott ; and months elapsed before the wine was exchanged for stronger liquids ; but the taste for drink, and the necessity for stimulants, had been firmly fixed, and it needed but little of a more powerful spirit to disarrange his ideas and completely bewilder his memory. Then the largest speculations, and not very honest proposals of these

harpies, were met with but little opposition; and his money or his signature was easily obtained in order to carry out schemes which were rash and oftentimes dishonorable.

Mr. Prescott's departure for Europe had left them still further time to operate; and the passion for drink was by this time so firmly established, that he could not, even if he had wished, untangle the web which they had wound about him.

Drinking had affected his health, by making him heavy, dull, and stupid; and most of the time, a vacant stare took the place of intelligence in his eye; and mumbled, indistinct words were often the only answer obtained of him when asked a question. Childish repinings and wearying complaints were much more common than violence; but sometimes he would become quite ungovernable and self-willed. And this miserable being Ellen attended with assiduous care; cheerfully resigning the smallest gratification of herself, and never leaving him, even for an hour, except when obliged to attend to her pupils. They had secured the services of an old and faithful servant, who had lived with Mr. Prescott when he first brought to his home his gentle Lucy, a bride, and who was extremely attached to them both; and in her care

Ellen felt that her father was quite safe during her necessary absences, provided he was not attacked by one of those ungovernable fits of violence ; yet every evening, when returning home, how wildly her heart would beat, until assured of his safety by looking into his room, and seeing him in his usual arm-chair, with a newspaper before him, which he thought he was reading, but which was seldom turned over.

A ray of something like pleasure would gleam across his face, when his lovely and gentle child would greet him with her sweet voice and pleasant smile ; and he would listen to her melodious voice as she sung to him, with apparent gratification. Sometimes Ellen would gently coax him to take a walk with her into the village ; and not an uncourteous or unkind remark ever reached her ear, nor did a stare of vulgar curiosity ever cause her to blush, as, giving him her arm, she carefully guided her father's tottering and feeble steps along the way. So well was her story known, and she herself so much respected and loved, that her sphere of purity and holy piety threw a halo even around the poor, degraded and fallen man.

The most encouraging accounts continually reached Ellen, of her mother's gradual recovery of sight ;

and after an anxious interval of four months, their kind friend, Dr. Howard, came himself to tell the tearful but happy Ellen, that her mother had again recovered her sight, and that nothing now prevented her return home, but the care necessary to recruit her general health; and he advised a still further residence where she was, as he feared any excitement would materially injure her. Hard as it was to bear the continued separation, still Ellen at once acquiesced in his advice that she should not attempt to see her mother for at least a couple of weeks.

Ellen observed that Dr. Howard several times looked earnestly and anxiously at her father; and she asked him, when they had left the apartment, if he perceived any indication of sickness in his appearance; to which he candidly answered that he did.

“He looks much more feeble than he did some weeks since. Have you noticed any indications of his not being well, within a few days past?”

Ellen replied, that he had appeared to be much weaker than usual, and more inclined to sleep; but otherwise she had not observed any change.

Dr. Howard left her directions for some medicine for her father, and told her what to do in case the attack should prove such as he suspected; he then

took his leave, promising to visit her father again on the morrow.

Ellen resolved not to leave her father during the night, but to remain on the sofa in his room. He retired to rest at his usual hour ; but Ellen observed that he seemed to be weaker than usual, and fell asleep almost as soon as he lay down. She had administered the medicine, as directed, and leaving him calmly sleeping, she went down stairs to communicate her fears to old Margaret, who she found had also noticed a change in him. Ellen reclined on the sofa, merely exchanging her dress for a wrapper, and Margaret remained in an adjoining room, ready to be called, should she be needed.

Mr. Prescott seemed to be sleeping quietly, and Ellen's fears being somewhat removed, she gradually became drowsy, and soon fell asleep, and dreamt of many a pleasant scene in her past life, which suddenly, however, became mingled in her fancy with dark and dismal pictures. She imagined that she was standing by a beautiful waterfall, such as she had often seen in their wanderings abroad, — that heavy clouds were above her, and that suddenly the roar of the cataract became almost deafening, and a hand, which she had not seen, was

pulling her forcibly towards it. She awoke with a sudden start, and found old Margaret standing by her, trying to arouse her, and an appalling sound, as of heavy groans or sighs, issuing from her father's bed. In an instant, Ellen was on her feet, and found Dr. Howard's prediction verified, that Mr. Prescott would shortly be attacked with apoplexy.

Old Margaret instantly summoned the nearest physician, whom Ellen had apprized of her father's illness, before retiring to rest. He came to her immediately; but a glance satisfied him that all remedies would be useless. Poor Ellen's fortitude did not forsake her under these trying circumstances; but how she longed for her dear mother's support! Yet she knew that her life perhaps depended on her being kept free from excitement; and earnestly and humbly did the good and pious daughter implore assistance from her Father in Heaven, to enable her to fulfil perfectly her duties to her earthly parents.

Mr. Prescott never recovered a moment's consciousness. He lingered for twenty-four hours, and then departed from this world, where he had so little honored his Maker's greatest gift — that of life!

When Ellen became aware that her father was indeed no more, she was, for a time, wholly overpowered by the bewildering thoughts which crowded on her memory. Her imagination flew rapidly back to the time of her childhood, passed in her father's costly mansion, surrounded by every luxury which wealth could provide; and when that father, whose bloated and disfigured corpse now rested in its last sleep, was her idol, whose footstep, as he returned from his business, was watched for, and on whose knee some of the happiest hours of her youth were passed—when her slightest wish expressed to him was instantly granted, and who had never uttered a harsh word to her, until he became no longer master of himself, and so bitterly reproached her for depriving him of those luxuries he so much prized. But these complaints and his harshness were all forgotten. She mourned now for the father she had so dearly loved; and sorrow gently threw a veil over his faults, leaving freshly impressed on her mind the beautiful remembrance of her father's early love.

It was considered best to apprise Mrs. Prescott of her husband's death, and also to counsel her to remain quietly where she was, so as not to expose her health to the excitement which would be the

consequence if she attended the funeral ; to which she consented reluctantly, at first ; but Ellen having written to her, and implored her to remain quiet, saying again and again, " Dear mother, I have none left now but you ! Oh, think how precious is your life now to me, and do not risk it by exposing yourself to this painful scene ! " this strong argument, as Ellen well knew, operated more powerfully with her unselfish and gentle mother than any other ; and Mrs. Prescott remained, and Ellen encountered the sad trial of attending her father's remains to their final resting-place, without any relative to sustain her, or whisper words of comfort — yet not alone — for her Heavenly Father was breathing peace and comfort into her soul ; and the consciousness that, as far as it was in her power, she had saved her earthly father's memory from reproach, cheered her, even amidst the dark and trying scene.

CHAPTER X.

CONCLUSION.

THE meeting of Ellen and her mother can be more readily imagined than described. How closely the bonds which united them together were tightened by their lonely situation! but they gave not many hours to useless sorrow.

Ellen, true to her promise, insisted that the creditors of her father should receive the sum which she had reserved for his lifetime, and which her mother absolutely refused to retain for her own use.

“If my gentle Ellen can encounter the trials necessary for our support, surely I can; and I could not enjoy living on that money, while the thought that even one poor man might be suffering from poverty and privation, in consequence of the

wrongs which others more than himself made my unfortunate husband commit."

Finding these two gentle women firm in their refusal to avail themselves of the small income which remained, Mr. Stanton added to the amount already received, the proceeds of the sale of the pretty cottage which had belonged to Ellen, and also the small sum retained by her for her father's use; and Ellen declared that she now felt free for the first time since her father's misfortune.

"Thank Heaven!" exclaimed the enthusiastic girl, "I have not now a dollar of the old miser's gold! All has gone, and cheerfully been relinquished, to wipe away, if possible, the guilt and sorrow caused by its accumulation. Now, how cheerfully will I work, and never dread to hear the reproach that Ellen Prescott lives in luxury, and the poor man, who trusted her father, is starving! The curse which came with the miser's gold will never haunt me again!"

And now, strong and hopeful in her sense of right, Ellen went on her way rejoicing; bringing to her daily labor a cheerful, unbroken spirit, and still spreading sunshine around her, by her uncomplaining submission to her present situation in life. To be of use, was her great desire; and the only

wealth which she coveted, was that which should make her *rich*, by enabling her to benefit mankind in any way, however small; and she daily realized that, in order to do this, worldly wealth was not so much needed as an unselfish disposition, and a determination to make a good use of what had been bestowed on her. Her 'mite' often brought more real joy and comfort than all the 'treasures' cast in by others; for a blessing surely went along with it.

Ellen became in a short time the beloved and respected wife of Mr. Stanton; and in the 'Far West,' whither he voluntarily turned his steps after his father's death had left him free, she is cherished as a gift from Heaven. She and her dear mother are indeed 'ministering angels' to many a sufferer; and she follows in her husband's steps, 'pouring in oil and wine' to many an outcast, left 'by the way, to perish.'

That Mrs. Stanton has found the source of 'true riches,' her cheerful, happy life shows. She had known what life was, burdened with unhallowed gold; she had also known the precious feeling of independence earned by her own endeavors; and she thanked God daily, that she was enabled, by his assistance, to seek for the fountain of true

wealth — purer than gold, “and more to be desired than fine gold.”

“Oft the cloud, which wraps the present hour,
Serves but to brighten all our future days!”

THE END.



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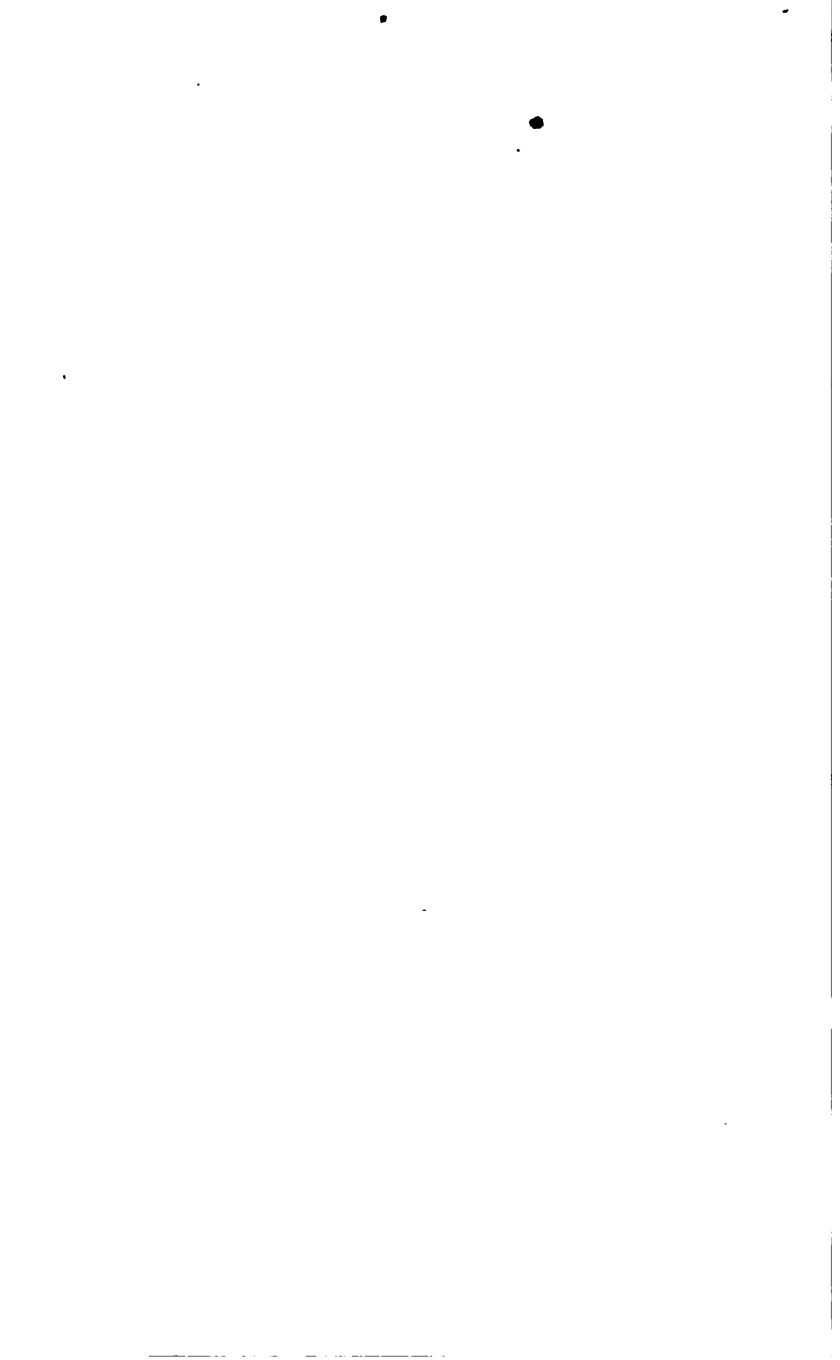
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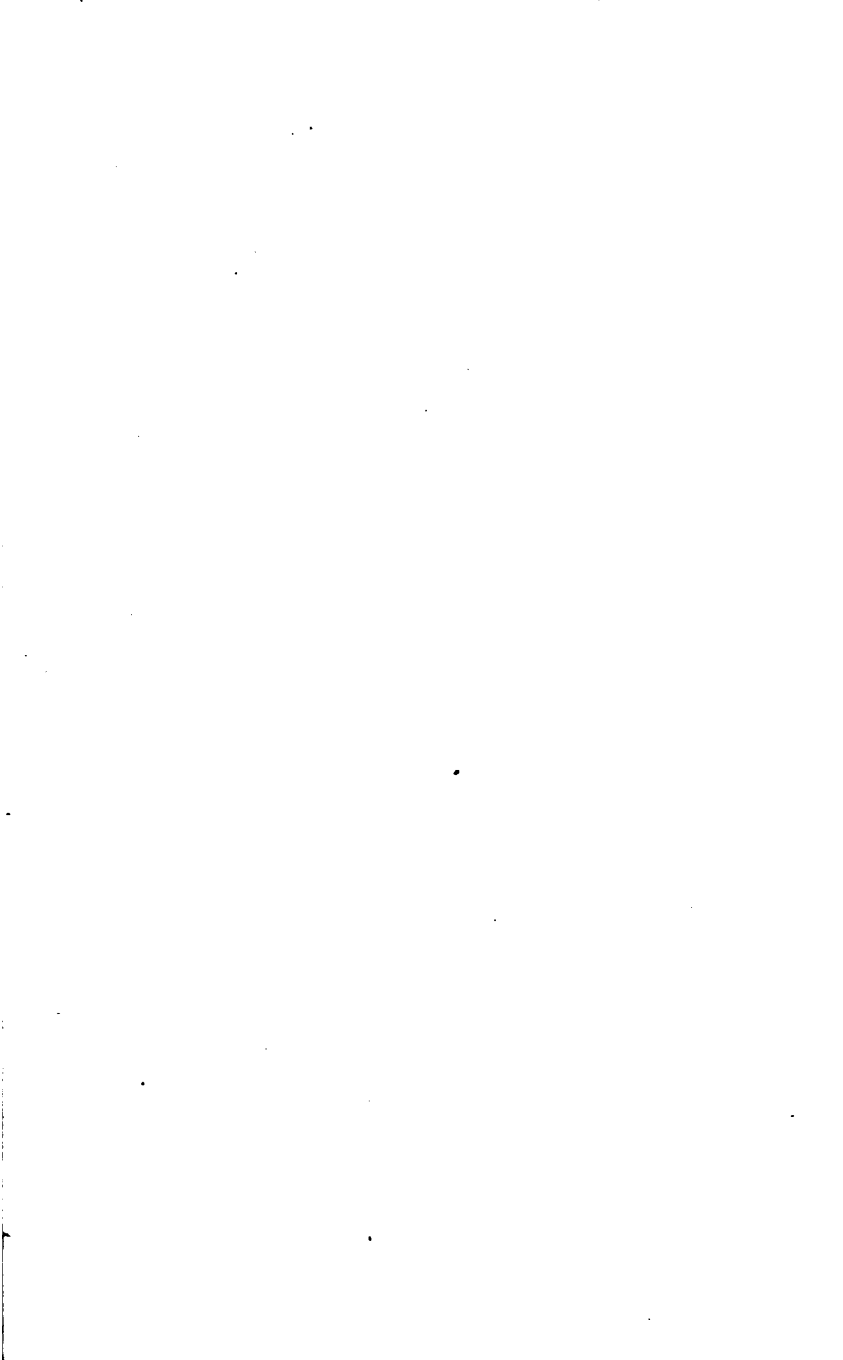
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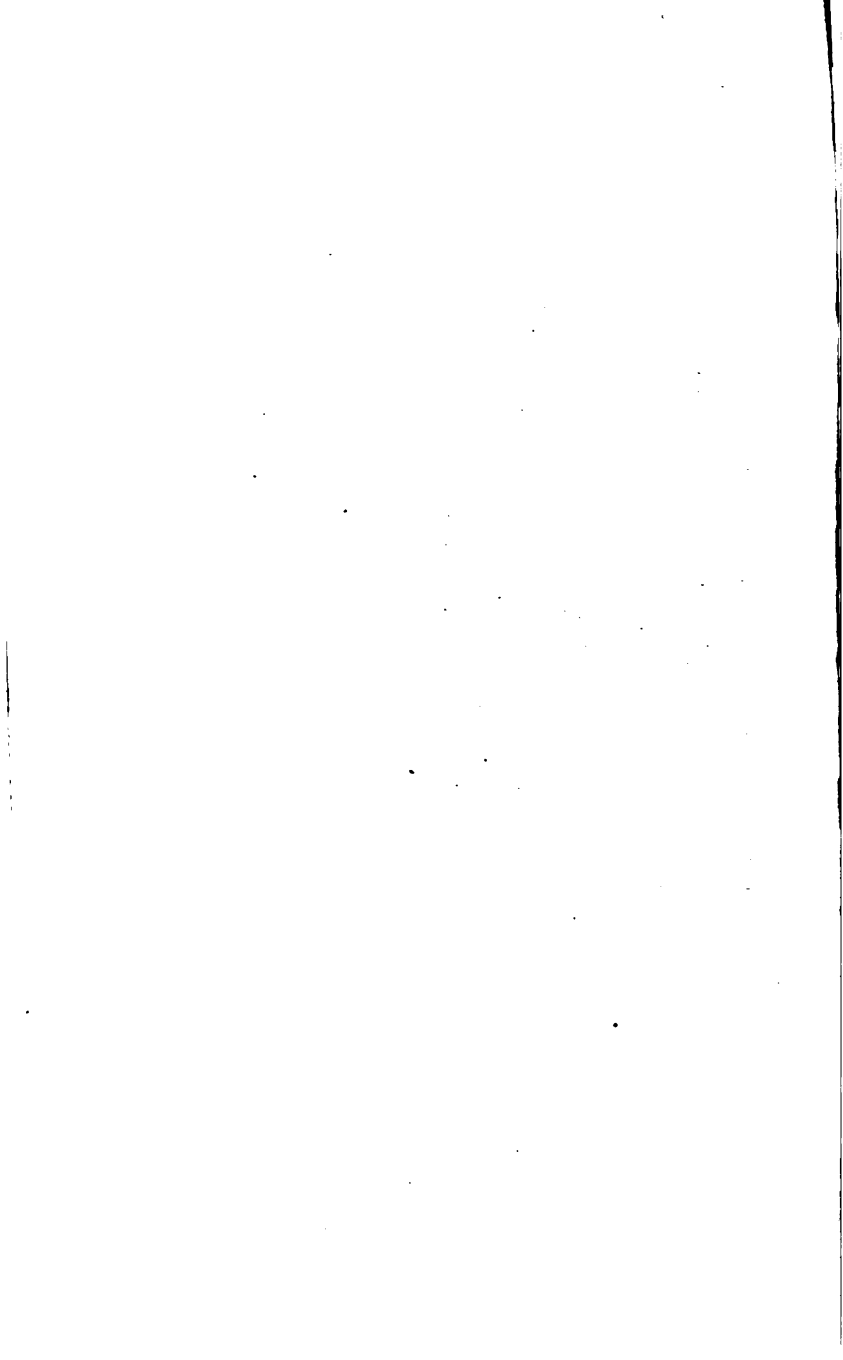














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